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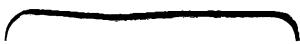
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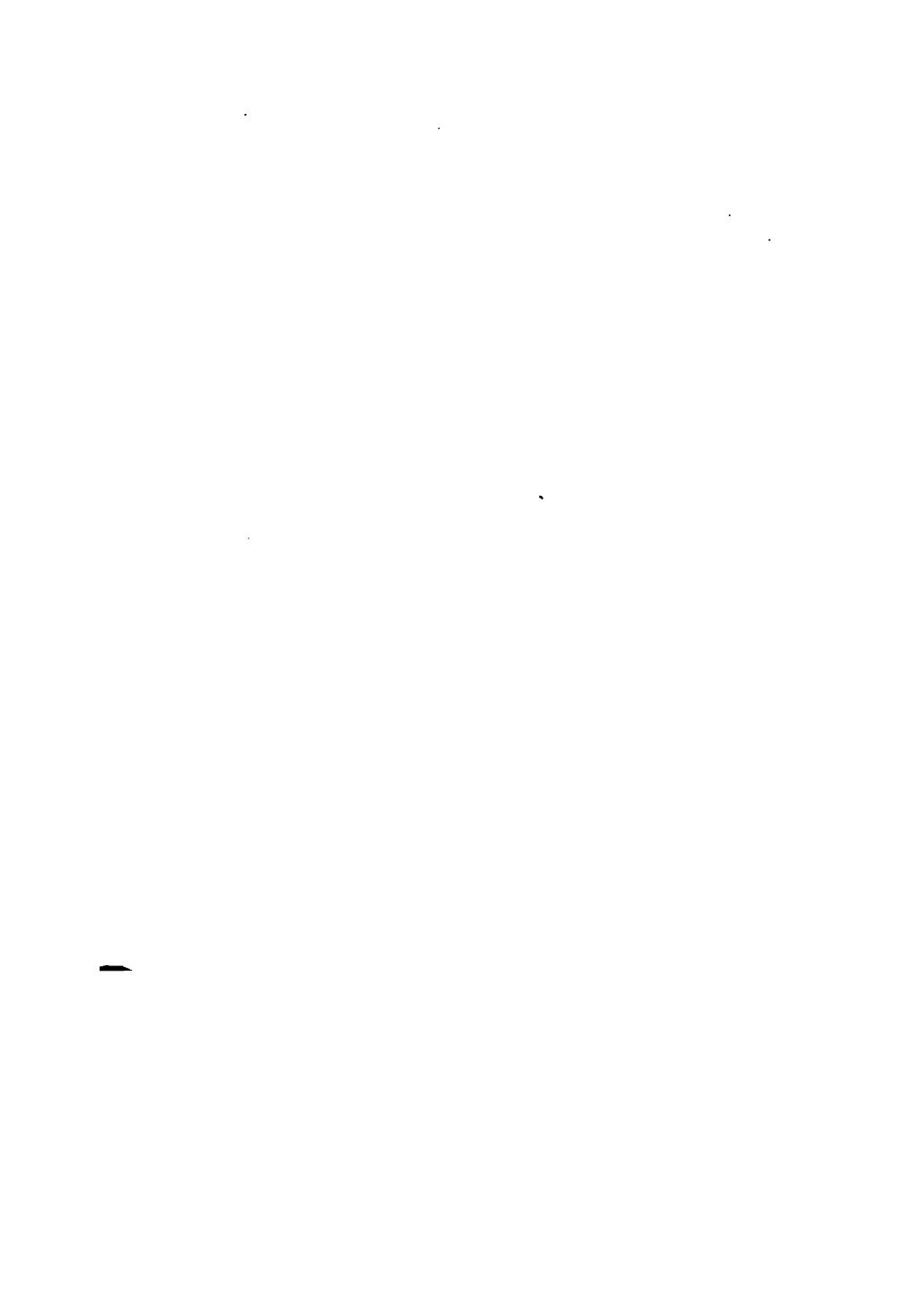
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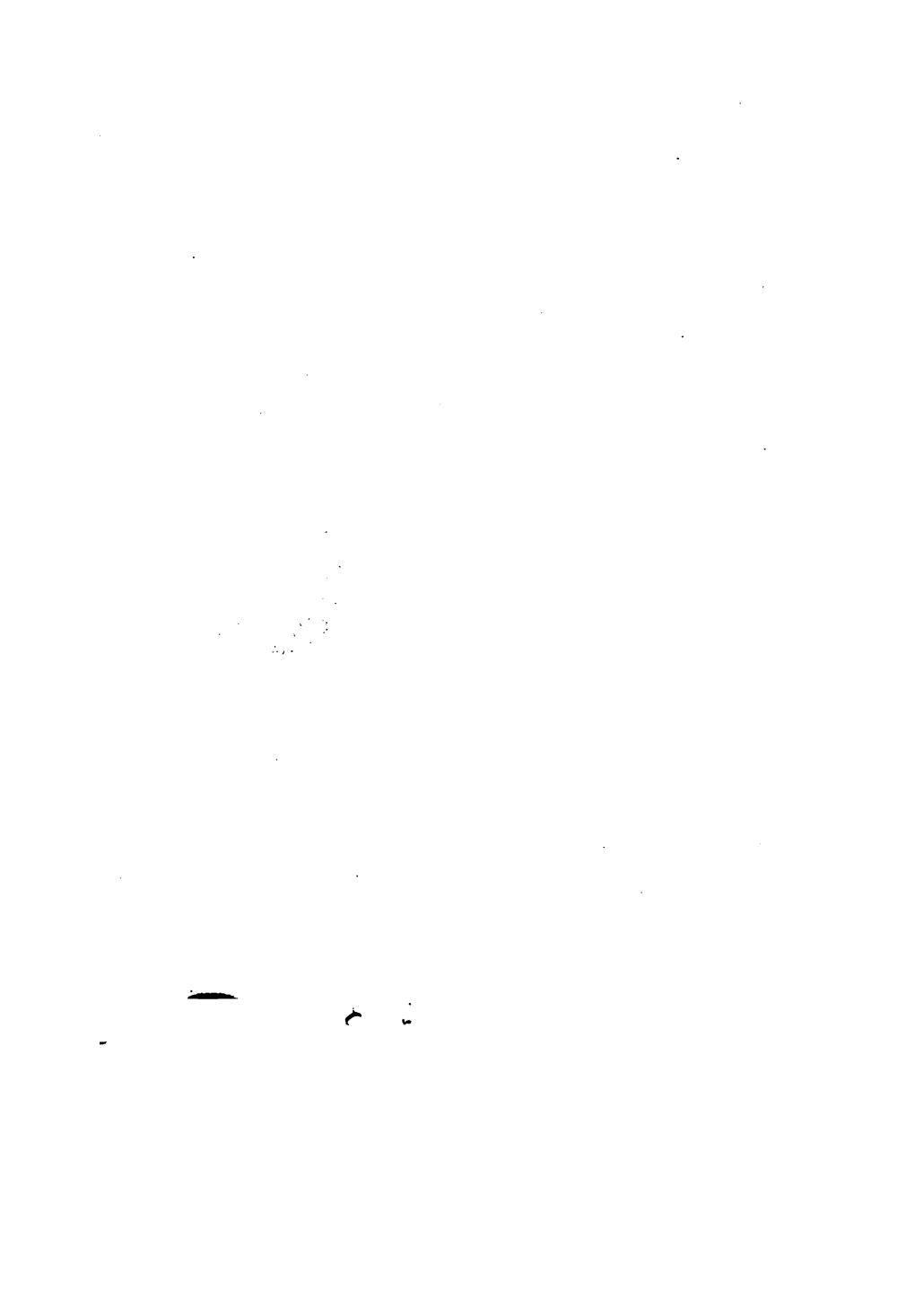


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OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.



OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.

BY

COURTENEY GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE LADY LORRAINE," "A LOSING HAZARD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.



CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS was over now, with all its pleasures and all its duties. Kate, who had fled so precipitately from the home she had found for herself at Ivy Cottage, was in London. She had feared discovery after that evening spent at the Priory with Lady Fanny, and solitude in a crowd was better than the dread that haunted her near Kirkcudbright. When she had gone there, in a fit of urgent

of Fanny's presence and Fanny's friendship. Now, in her lodging, in an unfrequented part, she was happier, she was freer; there was only one thing she really missed, and that was Fanny's face of sunshine.

It was a cold day in January, and she felt sad and lonely, for the snow was in the streets, and Harold was pinched with the cold, and fretful. She was feeling perhaps more forlorn and disconsolate than usual, for vague rumours had reached her of children's parties, of magic lanterns, at Kirkcudbright, now faded and vanished, and of a Christmas-tree at the Priory, and she let the contrast with her own life affect her painfully. She likened herself to the poor tree, now stripped of its

beauty, and of its gaudy ornaments, cast forth to die, and dreaming in its death-agony of the smiles and bright gladness it had provoked.

She had been alone now for three days or more. She was dull, so she proposed a treat for herself, and putting Harold away warm in his little bed, giving him first one last kiss and then another, she set off to see the pictures at Burlington House.

As she walked her spirits rose ; the air was exhilarating. She felt almost happy.

There was mud and dirt in the streets, snow in brown heaps, the pavements slimy and sticky, and the people looked splashed and miserable ; the women especially all looked draggled and unhappy.

Inside the building all was brightness —just one dream of beauty after another. And she stood as one in a dream.

human knowledge of truth, human aspiration that England could show of her Old Masters. To draw a deep breath and steep one's soul to the full in it! So much more beauty to ennable life in the future; so much more truth to live by! To see this effort, and that dream of the painter, and to feel instinctively what he had aspired to portray, and how he had raised himself, and how he had tried to raise others by his work; to lose one's identity in the painter's thought, and in the creation in which it resulted. To adore childhood and simplicity in Gainsborough's Cottage Girl, with the warm light, like love, thrown over her; and to admire beauty and pride of birth in Romney's group of the Leveson-

Gowers, and Lady Carlisle's picture. To see the love of colouring in the Titians and the Tintoretti, and to stand hesitating between Lady Hamilton and Madame de Pompadour ; whether to give the palm to Boucher's skill of art in the pomp and splendour of apparel, and to the piquante face and expression, of the Frenchwoman ; or to admire most the simplicity (albeit an affectation) of Romney's handiwork ? What eyes, what colouring, what native brilliancy had Nelson's favourite ! It is an unfair contrast for any woman, to be in a coarse *déshabille* in juxtaposition to all that art and wealth and fashion and extreme taste can do.

And then, looking down from the pictures of these fair women and of noble men, her eye wandered to those moving about her. What a shock it is to come

how coarse every one looked, and those who did not, how artificial, how superficial their taste, their knowledge !

The lives of the people in their frames on the walls had been ransacked and turned inside and out. The best and worst of them was probably known or guessed at. What were the lives of those around ? There was a woman in a green velvet gown, with beads and jewellery and a smart hat ; she was claiming acquaintance with this and with that picture. This she had seen at Trentham, that at Lowther, this somewhere else ; and to most she seemed to feel herself superior.

How far was she superior in fact to the painter's work and the poet's dream ?

But Kate at least was free to see ; she

could work on, dream on as she liked ; in time she thought she might make her life as beautiful as any painting—if God would let her.

Just then she saw Lord Dalton. Was it him really ?

Yes, surely ; there was that old excited “maestro” manner, that dwelling on a picture, revelling in it, loving it, as it were. Kate knew it so well. He was talking to a lady, tall, dark, bright-eyed, good-looking. She was looking on, listening, letting him have it all his own way, in fact.

“ His company-manners, his prettiest ways, his superficial enthusiastic talk,” grumbled Kate to herself, and turned away to another room that he might not see her.

Presently she found they had come to

How close their heads are together! How conscious she looks, how happy and eager he seems!

But, who is that other with Dalton? Kate fancies she has seen her face before, but where she cannot tell. Kate forgets Moll, who had sat with her back towards her one night at the table when she had lain on the sofa by the fire suffering from her sprained ankle.

Kate knows nothing of Fanny's engagement. She does not know that she and her mother are up in London buying a trousseau, and that Julius came to town because Fanny did, and that Moll insisted on coming too to see a pantomime, and to see Lord Dalton, who was now doing duty in London. Kate knows nothing

of the opposition Fanny daily meets with, of the doubtful congratulations, of the sincere condolences, of the bitter “word in season” continually dropped upon her and Julius; Kate only thinks how happy and how conscious they both look, and she breathes a blessing upon them.

Dalton and Moll were looking at Madame de Pompadour; he was explaining, she was listening; he was rapt, excited, interested.

“The woman is not handsome; she is coarse,” said Kate.

She was on the other side of the room, behind them, ignored, unobserved.

Then they sat down on the sofa.

His companion said something in a whisper.

He smiled, turned to her, talked easily,

follow, as on two people who are at their ease it does fall, and is enjoyed.

"It is just how he used to talk to me," said Kate to herself.

Madame de Pompadour seemed to be looking on—to be looking at the two, and at Kate.

Just then she felt inclined to go forward, to speak to him, to let him see her.

How would it be? Would it be discomfiture for the other?

But look at that beaming smile. What thorough confidence seemed to shine in it; and what eagerness in his manner to her!

And Madame de Pompadour was looking on superciliously. No, Kate would not disturb them.

“Let him go,” said she to herself; and quietly she would have slipped off by herself, only all at once there she was facing Fanny.

“Oh, Kate!” said Lady Fanny, with glad surprise in her voice, and putting out both her hands.

Kate put both hers behind her, and smiled for answer into Lady Fanny’s face.

The hungry look of sorrow that had been on her countenance a moment ago died away.

“So I have found you at last! Why did you run away?”

“Because you would not let me stay in the shadow. Some day, perhaps, I may come out. . . .”

“Into the sunshine—eh, Kate? Say so,” whispered the other softly.

“Perhaps—I don’t know; but your

into her eyes again—"is that your brother over there?"

"Yes—Dalton; isn't he handsome?"

"And who is he talking to?"

Kate's tone arrested Fanny's attention.

"Moll—Miss Hawkshaw."

"Oh!" said Kate, seemingly satisfied, and turning away. "Where have I seen her, I wonder?"

"At the Priory—that evening with me."

"Ah! now I remember."

But the set look of weariness was on her face still.

"Kate, I am going to be married to Mr. Hawkshaw; congratulate me, won't you?"

Kate took a long breath.

"Ah, Lady Fanny, I already blessed you two when I saw you together without knowing why; and now, from the bottom of my heart, I do it again. You will be happy, I am sure; you are the very queen of happiness! You take it about with you everywhere. I always pray for you every day, in case even *my* prayers should do you any good; and now, God bless you both!"

She took Fanny's hand for the first time in her life, and then she glided away.

"Who were you talking to?" asked Julius, coming up at that moment.

"Kate," said Fanny, gravely.

"I only saw her back; was it really Kate?"

"Yes."

"Where is she now?"

Fanny was thinking over the sore look of sorrow she had seen on Kate's face, as she looked towards Dalton, and then how it had melted away when she told her of her own happiness.

"Did Dalton see her?" asked Julius.

"No; why?"

"I should not say you saw her, I think," said he.

"Of course not. Dalton does not know of her existence; why should I tell him?"

Julius wondered whether he should enlighten Fanny any further about Kate or not. Yet it was not his affair, and Kate herself had run away from discovery. Why inflict needless pain on Fanny? Why interfere at all. Surely for the present, at least, the less said the better.

"Here is the first hearty congratulation I have had," said Fanny presently. "I wish you had heard it, Julius. I feel as if I must be happy after that. I wonder why other people cannot be earnest and sincere. It strikes me the higher we go in society the less people say what they mean. I suppose they are afraid to. But even my warmest well-wisher's words never sounded to me so clear and hearty as Kate's did just now."

Afterwards, when they were driving along Piccadilly, there was Kate walking by herself.

Dalton was leaning over to Moll, talking with her, as if he were aware of no one else's existence.

Lady Fanny wondered if Kate saw them.

CHAPTER II.

News in a country neighbourhood spreads like wildfire, and one of the first to hear of Lady Fanny FitzMorris's engagement to Julius Hawkshaw was Bob Lawley. His little drawing-room had become a sort of place of appointment for all the idle and kindly-disposed people for miles round, and news of all sorts was here retailed for his amusement. He had first been told on grave, indisputable authority, Mrs. Camelford being then chief spokes-

woman, that she was engaged to Lord Swansea.

“Oh no, surely not,” said Mr. Lawley, remembering the distinctness with which Lady Fanny had herself asseverated to him that she would not marry him.

“Oh, but I assure you, Mr. Lawley, it is true. And I’ll tell you why. I wanted to know, so one day I went up to Kirkcudbright on some parish business, and I congratulated Lady Kirkcudbright, and she smiled and laughed, and said only that it was not announced yet.”

“Oh yes! And I think they were engaged at the time of the Spelling Bee. Did not you see how she smiled at him; and once on the sofa, nobody heard what she said.”

That was Miss Rosanna Weatherwax’s opinion.

"Not a bit of a sportsman; never anywhere in a run; don't think she would. . . ."

But then Mr. Camelford came, and said gravely that he heard the wedding would be in January, directly Christmas was over; and when he had gone, there was nothing left for Mr. Lawley but to wonder why she did it; if it were for the money, or whether Julius were the real fox, and the right line to which he had so cautioned her to keep. From the bottom of his heart he hoped so: any sort of sacrifice seemed incompatible to him with Fanny FitzMorris.

But the marriage was the subject of earnest conversation in the county. There was a feeling of disappointment in the neighbourhood with respect to it, at least

on the part of those who had known the Kirkcudbrights long. Fanny was, as her mother had said, the flower of the flock : not only was she the prettiest of the girls, but she was the most popular member of the family, the one who had most endeared herself to the county by her bright smiles and open frank friendship. They had expected she would marry somebody very great, and that she would become the queen of some very high sphere indeed.

“ But who is this Mr. Hawkshaw ? I ask you, sir, who is he ? ” asked an old squire, great in the hunting field, and who now faced Mr. Lawley’s sofa, sitting very much on the edge of his chair, while his countenance became every moment more inflamed with indignation.

“ They seem thoroughly respectable people,” said Mr. Lawley.

doubts on his first coming whether he should be called upon at all. I know my wife was a very long time indeed making up her mind."

"Only there are so many families here with a quantity of daughters," put in Mr. Camelford.

"And one heard he was so enormously rich," said another lady, a grand sort of woman, who loved London, and hated the country, talked of the parish, as our little village, and never spent a penny on it for which she would not get credit.

"Yes!" repeated the old squire," my wife did not like to hold back too long; and then, you know, there are the foxes. I said to her one day—' My dear, we must stand by Bob, whatsoever happens, and a

man with a property like that might do no end of harm to the county, if his soul is not in it.' ”

“ But still, who is he ? ” asked Miss Weatherwax.

“ His father began in a merchant’s house, till finally he became a merchant himself, I believe,” said Mr. Lawley. At any rate, it was good scent, and he stuck to it with good reason. He has made a rich man of his son.”

“ I think them rather stuck-up and purse-proud, these Hawkshaws, I must say,” said Mrs. Camelford.

Now, Julius had given the cold shoulder to Mrs. Camelford of late. He had discovered that he was not quite “ grand ” enough for her to speak to when Lord Kirkcudbright, or even Dick, or certainly the Duke, were anywhere near.

ticular nowadays. Look at some of the marriages one sees ! Life is made up of disappointments."

"Are you sure it wasn't skins—leather ? I heard so."

"I heard it was pills," said Miss Rosanna.

"If only he were more sporting . . ." groaned Mr. Lawley, getting tired of them all.

"A man who is nowhere," chimed in the squire.

"His father was in Parliament, though !" said some one.

"And voted like every one else, and never said a word."

"There he showed his sense."

Then Dick had come in one day ; it

was when the others were still away in London, and he and his father were left at Kirkcudbright.

“ So, Dick, I’m to wish you joy, my boy, I suppose,” said old Lawley, rather anxiously scanning his face.

Dick made a grimace.

“ What! on Fanny’s engagement?”

“ Yes, to be sure.”

“ I don’t mind telling you that we all think it rather a bore.”

“ Why?”

“ I don’t know. It is not what we should have chosen for her. Of course he’s a very good fellow, and all that, or we couldn’t have heard of it, but——”

“ Well?”

“ And there’s the money—and all that——”

“ Well?”

"Does she like him?" asked Bob Lawley at last.

"Yes, I suppose so. I never saw any one so changed or so happy in my life."

"Perhaps, after all, he's not such a snob as you'd suppose."

"Perhaps not. I hardly know him well enough to say. They've gone up to get the trousseau."

And then, one day, the Duchess drove over. She came in with extended hand, and a face brimming over with benevolence.

"You'll be surprised, Mr. Lawley, at this invasion on my part," said she, "but Fanny is away, and I thought you might be dull perhaps for want of a visitor."

"How very kind of you to come. I

thought I was forgotten, since I could no longer bring the hounds to Bolton myself, or partake of that excellent cherry brandy of the duke's."

" You must never think that again," said she gravely. " And now, where shall I sit so as to bother you least ? "

" Will you be quite comfortable there—so."

" But are you better, Mr. Lawley ? " asked she, when she had settled herself. " You will be out soon, surely—in the spring ? You must be tired of that sofa."

He looked away for a moment.

" Heartily sick of it, but it's no good."

She made haste to change the subject.

" And what do you think of Fanny's engagement, Mr. Lawley ? "

" I have not seen her since I knew it—

“ You are a man of caution. But, I think it a very good thing.”

“ Do you, Duchess ? ”

“ I made it.”

“ In heaven no marriages are made. Is not that a blessed promise ? ”

“ So like a man. I daresay it is because none are made that there are none.”

“ I dislike made marriages usually.”

“ Oh, but I didn’t begin this, I only went on with it; they were unhappy, quarrelling, silly, as young people will be, and I got up that Spelling Bee, and the next day, would you believe it, they were engaged.”

“ No ! Really ? Spelling Bees are useful things. I only hope she will be happy.”

"I think so. I really think so. I and the Duke had them over to Bolton to stay for hunting for a day or two."

"How did he go, Duchess, eh? How did he go?"

"Oh, I dont know anything about that. I didn't see him. But in the house he went charmingly, so full of conversation, and not a bit shy, quite at his ease, and so full of thought and sense, and such a memory. The Duke took quite a fancy to him, does nothing but talk of him. And he so seldom remembers anybody, except old Spiegel, or one or two old fellows who are remarkable for something or other."

"I am so glad, so glad! Then we may cry—'Forward away' with all our hearts."

"What do the people in the neighbourhood say about it, Mr. Lawley?"

“I don’t think they like it. I don’t think they like the Hawkshaws.”

“Why?”

“Nobody knows who they are.”

“Why, nobodies, of course. What does that matter? Handsome is that handsome does.”

“And they leave out their h’s.”

“That’s tiresome as their name begins with one. But that entirely depends on our nurses and governesses, and you know distinguished foreigners nearly always leave them out in talking English.”

“But old Mr. Hawkshaw is not a distinguished foreigner.”

“I don’t think Fanny will see much of the old people. Lady Kirkcudbright said she was quite touched at how the old lady offered to turn out bag and baggage at once. I am sure you wouldn’t sever two happy hearts, Mr. Lawley?”



"No, no, not I."

"Just tell the people what a good old soul Mrs. Hawkshaw is."

"So I will. And that whether it's leather, skins, old bottles, or pills it does not matter a straw."

"You see we can't help that now. And he is so artistic. The ideas he has given me for my drawing-room, you can't think."

"Education is a sad leveller, Duchess."

"I think it was the hunting in this case," said she with a malicious smile.

"Well, well, one can't keep up pride and haughtiness when the fox is in view, and when there is a glorious burst over hill and dale, as I used to say. Let every man enjoy himself then, at least, and let the world and its nonsense go anywhere it likes. Be he farmer or tradesman or

at my fences. Let him go, and the sooner I leave him behind—well, you know, Duchess, that's his own fault, not mine."

"Give me a good word to say to Fanny of you. She asked me to send her a good report."

"It's 'Who-whoop!' tell her, or going to ground, going to ground! Duchess, tell her to come and see me as soon as she comes back, if she would really do me good."

And Fanny went, of course.

One of the first things she did after their return from London was to send for Snail and to canter over to "the Brushes."

The old man's face soon grew radiant, as he was assured from her own lips of her happiness, and of Julius's perfections.

"Only he is not sporting," said he regretfully.

"No, not yet, but he will be; he likes it really, only he has never been in the way of hunting much. But why are you not better, Mr. Lawley? Gedge and I (Gedge was the huntsman) never thought it was to be like this."

"Ah, you won't see me out again, Lady Fanny; I'm an old fox now, and I've had my run."

The twilight was deepening over the room then, and a silence fell on these two fast friends.

"You have been my friend ever since I can remember," said she at last. "Do you remember leading the pony when I was quite small?"

"Yes," said he dreamily.

"And do you remember the pic-nics in

home by moonlight together?"

"Yes, as yesterday."

"They were merry days—papa was away so much over his racing; I suppose the troubles were just beginning—but what fun Dalton was and Dick. And then papa used to come home and bring friends with him, and they used to take you away from us."

"And do you remember—once you would not let me go, but held me tight, and then I put you on my shoulder, and so you came too."

"Yes; and the others said I was forward, but you said I was constant. Do you remember my first hunt, and my first tiny jumps? How proud I was!"

"And this is the end of the line—the end of the line."

"Would you like it all over again?" asked she, thoughtlessly.

"Oh, no, no, no! One life is enough."

"Forgive me."

"I should like to tell you—will you listen?"

Fanny felt herself quite a woman now. Julius made her listen to no end of things, and he said talking did him good. Fanny was beginning to learn how one can fill the part of comforter better by listening than by talking.

"I do not think you have ever been unhappy," said she. "You make every one else so happy."

"Perhaps that is why one tries; I don't know."

He looked grave enough. There was no thought of hunting in his talk now.

"When I am just at the end of my life,

got before you—not just missed it as I have."

"Just missed it!" echoed Fanny.

The old man had never talked like this to her before. He looked pale and shrunken; the tone of his voice was so different. Fanny dreaded what might be coming.

"You never heard my story, I fancy, not before I came here, to 'the Brushes?'"

"No."

"It is soon told. Those early years seem dim now, and so far away."

He paused, as though to consider his words.

"You were in India a long time, were you not?"

“ Yes. It was thus : There were two of us, my brother and I. He was the youngest—Evelyn. My mother died in giving him birth.”

“ Oh ! ” exclaimed Fanny, “ I always thought you were the youngest.”

“ No ; Evelyn was just two years younger than I was, but he was my father’s favourite ; not that he meant it—he was a strictly just man. But I do not wonder. Evelyn was so handsome, so lovable—a sort of nature that stole in and disarmed you, and that made you give way ; in that—my mother over again. Well, my father could not bear to part with Evelyn ; he must always be at home, he must always have this, always have that. Every one worshipped him, and every one spoilt him. At home, when I was there, I worshipped him too,

I had been too much alone, left to myself too much ; I thought they had no room in their hearts for me, so I never dared ask for a place. I think my father respected me, was proud of me, for I worked hard, and passed all my examinations with credit ; but I suppose I seemed cold, or unattractive, or too much wrapped up in work for them. At any rate, I was not the same as Evelyn."

Even now, Fanny's warm heart could see what he had suffered ; even now there was a trace on his face of what that smouldering jealousy had cost him.

"It must be terrible to be left out in the cold like that," said she.

"As far as strict justice went I was

never left out, but still that was not the same thing ; it takes a great deal to make up for affection. After college, I was put in the Guards, and then I forgot home troubles more readily—was there very little—and, strange !—just when I cared less and strove less for it, won my father's heart by the good opinions I gained in the regiment and in society.

“ My father used to talk to me often of Evelyn, who was still doing nothing—had muffed first at one thing, then at another—and I was somewhat anxious about him. My father, too, was annoyed ; his faith in him was beginning to be shaken ; but still he said, ‘ Every one was so fond of Evelyn he would be sure to fall on his legs somehow ! ’ And then he used to maunder on about how it was a wise dispensation of Providence that some men had talent

who could do least, so that even I began almost to believe it, too, after awhile."

"It was hard on you, after all your efforts," said Fanny.

"No; I almost think now nothing is hard on anybody. One brings so much on one's self. And then, at the end, it is almost sure to be quits. Well, that was early in the spring of the year. After that, I went back to rejoin the regiment in London, and the season began. I flung myself into everything with mad zest, and then—I fell in love. My cousin, Maude Lawley, was the loveliest girl I ever saw, and I soon found, or thought I found, that I was not indifferent to her. Her father was dead, she had heaps of brothers, and her mother was one by whom a young

guardsman with good expectations was not to be despised.

" Maude herself was not worldly ; she used to laugh at her poverty. They used to look up to my father as the head of the family. When this madness was at its height, I was suddenly sent for from home, and went to find my father dead, and myself in possession. Nearly everything was left to me—the old place, Brackenbury and all; and a competence to Evelyn, with an admonition to me in the will 'to care for him.' I guessed then that my father had gained an insight into his character, and that he wished to give me authority, as well as a sort of guardianship, over him.

" There was much to settle : the affairs had been neglected, and I had a multitude of papers to look over. By the

pass over the dreary months that followed. My time was divided between Brackenbury and London. Evelyn was abroad, learning languages. Then Christmas came. What with the desire to make home more cheerful for him, and to recover from the fearful sense of oppression and loneliness the death of a parent leaves behind; to put an end to a sweet doubt that had been haunting me; I conceived the idea of assembling some few of our relations together at Brackenbury, and amongst others, Maude and her mother. They came; we were all merry enough; Evelyn was the life and soul of the party. And now I don't know how to tell you the rest."

"I know it, don't I? Can't I guess it?

It was Evelyn, wasn't it?—more love—even that love stolen away—how hard!"

"Not quite right, Lady Fanny. It was my own fault, my own mad folly; how could I help it? how could I know? He had been the first always. Everybody had always loved him, he was so handsome. There was nothing attractive to a woman about me. Of course, I thought when I saw them together——"

"What?" asked Fanny, frightened, trembling for Maude now.

"Her eyes smiling into his, his eager passionate pleading—— And then you know I loved Evelyn; our father, too, had told me 'to care for him.' How could he, the spoilt boy, brook disappointment? How could he bear it? It might have killed him I thought, or, if he lived, it might turn him into a devil——"

friends every day ; she seemed to turn to him for help, for sympathy. I was nearly dying with the bitterness of it. I did not know I grew daily more cold, more distant. I did not know her gentle heart was suffering by my brutal behaviour. I only thought she avoided me because she preferred him. I did not know that in reality she was pained, surprised, wondering what she had done. I only thought she had deceived—there, let me put it more gently—that she had been mistaken, and that now she had found where her happiness lay. What could I do ? I could not stand in the way of the two beings I loved best on earth."

" Oh, my dear old friend," said Fanny, shrinking from what was to come.

"I did make one effort the evening we were dancing, and I went to Maude."

"Mine?" asked I, sharply, sternly, as if it were my right. And then I smiled miserably as if to apologise for the tone."

"No, Evelyn's," said she.

I turned away, stung.

"Why didn't you ask me sooner?" said she, following me half a step, trying, woman-like, to make up, hating to see me going in anger.

"What a fool I was!"

"Forgive me, Lady Fanny; this seems so childish, remembering just the very words. But they were the last words I ever heard her speak—that is why."

"What? oh, don't, it is too dreadful! What did you do?"

"I went and stood by her mother, and watched them dancing."

I would not see Maude's piteous glances at me now and again. I thought she was merely coquetting.

"They do seem fast friends," said my aunt, "and I don't like it. Evelyn hasn't a penny, and no more has Maude."

"After that I left the room, and then I wrote some letters. Then I went to London."

"Oh, what did you do?" asked Lady Fanny.

"I went to London and was hidden with my bitter thoughts. I had told them I wished to be lost for awhile. I gave up the property, my elder sonship, to Evelyn; I made over everything to him—Brackenbury, all, was his—and then I effected an exchange and went out to India. There,

proud of the sacrifice I had made, I became almost happy. I used to picture them to myself at Brackenbury—Maude, loving, beloved, blessing me every day ; Evelyn, master in the old home, and wondering when Bob would come back for his welcome. But I had seen no notice of the wedding in the papers. At last I wrote."

" Well ? " for he had stopped abruptly, and he had turned his face to the wall.

A silence fell on the room ; only the ticking of the old clock in the corner was heard.

" You see, it was all a mistake," said he, in an altered voice, at last. " Maude cared for me all the time ! Her mother answered my letter. She had refused Evelyn, with all his riches, Brackenbury and everything. My Maude after all ! "

not be repressed.

“What would you have done then, Lady Fanny?”

“I should have written to Maude and have told her to come out to you, and share your poverty. It would have made her happy.”

“I did do that. She wrote at once; and she started. I went down country to Calcutta to meet her . . .”

“Well?”

“She never came. The ship was wrecked on the way, and there was no meeting more for Maude and I in this world.”

Why did that clock tick so persistently?
Why is there so much misery in this

world ? Why are there some griefs too deep for words ? Why have our brightest and our best such bitter sorrows gnawing at their hearts ?

“Can you fancy it, Lady Fanny ? All my own mad folly !—that’s what I did—all my jealousy—my wicked, senseless jealousy !”

“And Evelyn ?” Fanny asked at last.

“He, too, I murdered: He could not bear it. At once, when Maude had refused him, he had become reckless, dissipated, had taken to betting and gaming. I wrote to him, but he never answered. He squandered more money every year—then sold Brackenbury; at last took to drink, and then the end came. That was how I cared for him.”

“You did your best; your sacrifice was noble, utter, unreserved.”

Her words seemed to fall into space—unheeded.

“And you?” she ventured to ask at last, “how could you bear it?”

“At first I thought I never should. I gave way to the wildest grief. I became morose, sullen, shut myself up with my sorrow, and vowed I would see no one: declared I only brought curses wherever I went. Then I thought I would live to try and save Evelyn, and I tried to exchange back to a regiment in England, but that takes time, and before it was concluded he died. After that I was ill with fever, and I suppose that was the saving of me; as I lay listless, getting well, hating life, I had time to think. Then they were all so kind, like brothers—and so I did live, and by degrees came to see that, having the life, I must do the best I could with it.”

“ And so you devoted yourself to other people, then ? ”

“ Not that—not so good as that, I fear. But I did good where I could ; I brought help and happiness, if it was possible. It was just a dream. But it was worth it.”

“ It has ended in no dream.”

“ Just that, failing my own happiness, to help others to theirs ; and somehow, Lady Fanny, it has brought me gleams of it myself. You do it unconsciously with your bright face, but, by-and-by, when you have the chance, or if ever you should be sad, which Heaven forbid, you will find it work that pays.”

Unconsciously, as she sat there in the twilight with him, the resolution was taking root in her heart, that as he had sown, so would she ; she, too, would strive for the happiness of others before her own.

used to come and stay at Kirkcudbright for weeks together when I came back, and he was still Lord Dalton. After that, when Brackenbury was bought back—for Evelyn had left me what there was to leave out of the wreck, and I was able to do that in time—I wanted some place for myself, so I bought ‘the Brushes.’”

“And then you took the hounds?”

“Well, it was something to do, and they wanted somebody. I begin to think it was the only good thing I ever did in my life.”

Fanny laughed.

“Now I don’t know what they’ll do,” said he drearily. “I wish Julius were sporting.”



CHAPTER III.

THE wedding had been fixed for the end of January ; it was to be at Kirkcudbright, of course ; and the onus of the preparations fell on Lady Kirkcudbright.

Perhaps what troubled her more than all the rest was the list of guests. The Hawkshaws—Mr. and Mrs. and Miss—had left the Priory. They had gone on to Tunbridge Wells after that visit to London, the reason assigned being that home duties and home charities required Mrs. Hawkshaw's supervision just at the be-

not find Shropshire as near to the City as he should like to be, and that Moll considered Tunbridge Wells was nearer to Hyde Park Barracks, and consequently nearer to Lord Dalton, than Shropshire. They would, of course, come back for the wedding. If Moll could arrange to bring her parents by the same train as that by which Lord Dalton would travel down, so much the better would she be pleased.

The Duchess was staying at Kirkcudbright. She would be there until over the wedding; and very useful did Lady Kirkcudbright and the girls find her. Still, if it had been possible to make out that list of wedding guests without her supervision, Lady Kirkcud-

bright would have been all the better pleased. There was an unspoken animosity on the subject of this wedding between the two, although the Duchess's counsel was nearly always followed; yet, if she could have filled this list without asking for it, Lady Kirkcudbright would have been more content with herself.

She was sitting in front of the fire in her boudoir, and the Duchess had come in and had installed herself near her with her work. Lady Kirkcudbright had a pencil and paper in her hand, and the Duchess had looked up inquiringly once or twice, as though she wondered at her occupation and at her perplexed face, but she had not made any remark.

The Duchess and Lady Kirkcudbright were both undeniably large women; the wedding, considered under their auspices,

sence just then bitter thraldom. The peaceful, unconcerned face bent over her cross-stitch was irritating. She would almost have liked to talk over this weighty matter aloud to herself, to say the names aloud to see how they sounded. It is rather difficult to make calculations when you don't want to look as if you were calculating anything.

She was now considering deeply whether only those people should be asked to the wedding whom she herself honoured with her friendship, and whether she should try to start Fanny in good society at once, by entrapping people into smiling upon her at Kirkcudbright as a Hawkshaw, or whether . . .

“Writing poetry, Caroline?” asked the Duchess quietly.

“No,” said Lady Kirkcudbright, with a start, turning to stare upon her cousin.

“Oh, I thought you were.”

“After all, Louie, I think this wedding had better be shuffled over as quietly as possible, and then we can see how people take it, and perhaps give poor Fanny a lift afterwards.”

“Why?”

“How can I ask people—my friends—to come to it? I am so ashamed of it. Do let us make as little noise as possible over it, and just let her get away quietly and take to her new life quietly.”

“Then somebody will say she is not properly married.”

“You see—what am I to do?”

“I should ask everybody you can. It

shaw do that? No, no; I know perfectly well how it will be. All the snobs I have snubbed all my life will make up to her and be her dearest friends, and all my friends will think me no end of a bore foisting such a connection on their acquaintance."

"Then you'll drop them, dear?"

"How can I do that, Louie?"

"I don't see the good of being the great lady of the county if you can't command a little obedience."

Lady Kirkeudbright had been longer in the county than the Duchess, and by right of tenure considered herself the greatest lady there. The Arranmores had only bought Bolton a few years ago,

because they found their property in the north inconveniently distant from Town. Then they were only at Bolton for such a short time in the year that the Duchess did not know much of the county. But the Duchess never failed to twit Lady Kirkcudbright on the prerogative and responsibilities she arrogated to herself.

“What would you do, Louie?”

“I don’t think it will do to be very proud over it.”

“But I have been proud all my life.”

“There must be many people the Hawkshaws will like to ask.”

“I have given them a margin of twenty.”

“That is as many as we can stand, I think. But let me look at your list.”

Unwillingly Lady Kirkcudbright passed it to her.

three ; who are they ? ”

“ I don’t know. We must have some men.”

“ Oh yes, and Dick’s friends, two ; same thing. Then Lord Tarleton, Castle-trees, etc., etc. ; very well. Dick Lorrequer, Harry Vane, etc. And now we come to the county. What is this division ? ”

“ Oh, that first half means all the people I will certainly ask ; the other half I don’t know about. Unless we tear it up, Louie, and don’t ask any one at all.”

“ Nonsense, Caroline ! Well, now for the first half : Douglas, Sefton, Parker, Clavering, Bates . . . Who is Bates ? ”

“ They scold me so if I don’t ask him always. He has foxes.”

“Oh! Camelfords and parish ; Miss Weatherwax, with her aide-de-camp, Miss Gauntlet ; Lawley, Stanley, Hylton, I see ; Kemps, who are they ? ”

“Rich—Manchester—big house. About the same standing as poor Fanny will be, I should think.”

“Brown ? I’m in the other half now, Caroline.”

“Yes, I know. Rich—coals, I think.”

“Stevens ? ”

“Yes, good woman—built a church ; can’t be snubbed.”

“Farrer ? ”

“New people and objectionable ; girl writes novels, and they’re all clever.”

“Cook ? ”

“Very vulgar people. But they sent such a present . . . on purpose to be asked, I suppose.”

ought to ask, be sure, most certainly, you must."

"I shall have done my duty."

"And by giving the Hawkshaws a margin of twenty, you will have done it liberally."

"If I could be buried somewhere out of sight all day, Louie, what a comfort it would be! Fancy twenty people all like the Hawkshaws!"

"Oh no, classes don't go about placcarded like that, I regret to say; perhaps some of Mr. Hawkshaw's relations may be quite presentable. Half of the young married beauties of the London season come from Manchester or somewhere. You can always tell them by their

never lasting, however, and getting so coarse."

"Fancy that soldier-like Moll being my Fan's bridesmaid."

"I thought you fancied her for Dalton's bride, Caroline?"

"Well, so I did. Of course, that is all over now, and I did wish it. Curious that it does not now seem to me half so objectionable as this is. Just fancy, all those people here—sniffing here, poking there—taking up this present in their hands, pointing at that! Fancy Lady Clavering, the mightiest of the mighty, inspecting the Hawkshaw family generally, and the bridegroom in particular; fancy me introducing Mr. Hawkshaw to her, as I suppose I must, Louie?"

"I suppose you must, Caroline."

"And, fancy Lady Douglas here too,

stand it, how we shall come out of it!"

The same conversation between different members of the family, and in different language, ran on for days, till at last the wedding day itself arrived, and the business of preparations gave little time for idle talk.

There had been snow the day before; it still lay on the ground; but to-day the sun was shining brightly, and the snow glittered and gleamed in its rays, like a smile of peace thrown suddenly over a lifetime.

The old church, too, in the valley seemed to share in the smile, while its bells pealed out their merry-voiced call: broad on its walls lay the sunshine, and

broad, too, lay in places the deep shadows cast by buttress and projecting aisle. The very ivy-leaves, glistening with fallen drops, and with snow nestling here and there in the cups they made for it, seemed to shimmer and share in the universal gladness; while one or two precocious birds, forgetting that it was winter, sent out some full-throated notes from the elms near the old latch-gate.

The churchyard was thronged with people, all more or less interested, all more or less inquisitive, all dressed in their best. They moved to and fro impatiently between the evergreen arches, stared stupidly at the banners the school-children held, pressed to the front when a carriage drove up, were ready with a cheer on the slightest provocation, threatened to annihilate the little red-cloaked

were, though perhaps necessary for the hilarity of the proceedings, very much in every one's way.

The more distant neighbours were the first to arrive ; then the Duchess and the bride's sisters ; after that, more from Kirkcudbright, and more bridesmaids ; then Lady Kirkcudbright. She stepped from her carriage with her head an inch lower than usual, and her step had lost much of its assurance. Nevertheless, her greetings to those around her were urbane and courteous, as was their wont. There seemed, however, a sort of nervous anxiety about her, as though she wondered in her innermost soul what they all thought of it.

Then the Hawkshaws arrived ; she

welcomed them all warmly. After she had done so, she looked round once more on those nearest and dearest to her, to probe, if she could, to their innermost souls, what they thought of it.

The church was quickly filling, and then Julius took his place to await his bride.

"He looks well enough," whispered Lady Douglas to Lady Clavering.

"A good figure," whispered her neighbour back to her.

"Will get coarse," said Mrs. Sefton.

"No; I like his face," said the Duchess.

"How late Fanny is!"

"Really, if one didn't know, one might think he was a gentleman," said somebody else.

"Doesn't Ju look well?" whispered Mrs. Hawkshaw to anybody who might choose to answer.

"Isn't Ju handsome?" asked Mrs. Hawkshaw again.

"Very," answered Harry Vane, who had been had down to make everything go well.

"I wish Peter would be quiet; look how he's fussing, getting quite 'ot and red already!"

"I wish he would," said Harry Vane.

The bridesmaids were all gathered in a knot by the door. Silence and expectation were becoming painful, when all at once there was a stir, a movement, Julius looked round, and the bishop and the clergyman thought they need not play the part of statues any longer. There was even a whisper of "the bride! the bride!" when who should really appear

but Bob Lawley, who was being carried in on an invalid's chair.

The flush died away from Lady Kirkcudbright's cheek, as Harry Vane and Dick hurried down the church to help Mr. Lawley.

"Hush! no fuss," said he, "I had made up my mind to come and see her to-day."

They brought him up to the top among them all. There was not one person there but had a kind word and smile for Bob Lawley, but their hearts ached to see his shrunken face and his helpless injured frame.

A moment more, and Fanny really came. Fairer than ever she seemed, as she glided through them on her proud old father's arm; he with bearing so aristocratic, so haughty, she walking meekly

by Julius's side. There was a murmur of approbation from the lower end of the church as she passed, and the hushed interest with which the guests at the top regarded her, spoke approbation almost as plainly.

And then the service began ; so some people looked at their prayer-books, while others studied the floor ; others again speculated on the costumes around them, and some few thought of the service. More thought of marriage in general, and most of them, on this individual marriage in particular, and wondered how it would turn out. Dalton's friends thought the snob a very lucky fellow, and wished they were rich snobs too ; and Lord Tarleton and the

Duchess whispered to each other—Fanny was a dear little thing, and that she deserved all the happiness in the world. Then the sun—the world having turned round very fast just then—peered through a particular pane in the great chancel window, and decorated Fanny's white robes with a great shining band of red and purple and yellow.

“A right royal wedding garment,” said old Lord Tarleton.

“It is an angel’s robe,” said the dear sentimental Duchess.

And not content with that, the sunshine next peeped at the kneeling group of bridesmaids; made sunny rays of Katie’s fair hair; dazzled another so that she could not look up; and gave Harry Vane opportunities to make all sorts of grimaces, for he had been invited that everything might go off well.

the Duchess marshalled every one in their proper places ; and then carriage-load after carriage-load was deposited at Kirkcudbright, where followed the usual breakfast, no speeches—though Mr. Hawkshaw tried hard to make one—and the usual dull hour till it was time to go.

Only Fanny's bright face and gentle farewells, and Julius's hearty straightforward manner, made amends for all dulness, for all waiting, and for all impatience.

“ It isn't 'good-bye,' ” said Fanny to some of them, as she stood on the doorstep before getting into the carriage to go away. “ It isn't 'good-bye,' I hope ; you will let me try to deserve your friendship

and the kindness you have shown me to-day, better when I come back."

And Julius—whose heart was very full, for he had been made much of by many people, both small and great, most of whom he had never seen before, and all of whom thought they were patronising Lord and Lady Kirkcudbright by their kindness, and were glad of the opportunity—Julius thanked them too. Only he understood it; it was for Fanny's sake they were so kind, and for Fanny's sake he thanked them.

And in the evening the old house looked gay enough still, though Fanny, its fairy queen, had departed.

Another fairy—a sort of fairy godmother—was still there in the shape of the Duchess, and she had quite banished all sense of flatness, or of any void, by

Quaint devices adorned the old hall and staircase, and quaint dresses adorned and disfigured the thronging guests. Who could refuse to come to a calico ball? Who could turn away with anything like disdain from Darby and Joan in the shape of Mr. and Mrs. Hawkshaw? Such a beaming, benevolent old couple never was seen! The county fell in love with them at once. If they were so nice, so generous, so hearty, what must the young man, the prize which the flower of the flock had drawn, be like!

Much impressed with the importance of maintaining throughout the evening the part she was acting, and persuaded that Darby was nothing without Joan, and Joan nothing without Darby, Mrs.

Hawkshaw hardly allowed her husband to stir from her side, and hardly allowed him to answer when he was spoken to, and yet referred nearly every one to him by energetic shakes of the head and other gesticulations when she was herself addressed. Such a laughing, merry evening never was spent! The walls rang again with glad voices and soft laughter; and Harry Vane imparted to Dick Lorrequer and to Dalton that he felt quite crest-fallen because he was not wanted to make anything go off well. But what could he do? There were wasps buzzing, Union Jacks flying, man-cooks dancing, clowns performing, Mother Hubbard flirting, and ambulance nurses having tea. There were peasants pirouetting, sailors being oh, so jolly! and Watteau figures by hundreds tripping up and down the old

telling fortunes in the corner, and the Queen of Hearts asking for tarts all night. Then there was a fish-girl with her gown tucked up as if she had just come in from the rocks, with a net full of fish over her shoulders; and there were two flower-girls, who laughingly flitted about everywhere, as if the world were a big flower garden, and you had nothing to do but sit and laugh in it all day long.

What more could be done to make a day go off well? Had not the Duchess helped her little favourite well? Should not people go away saying the Kirkcudbrights and the Hawkshaws were charming? Had not Fanny a right now to expect that she and Julius might really be popular, after all?

"I never knew you so quiet in my life, Peter, before," said Mrs. Hawkshaw to her spouse on their homeward way.

"Liz, I never was in such high society before ; and, Lor', how I laughed ! What guys we all were ; but I suppose I was the biggest guy of any of them ; so I just looked and held my tongue, especially when my Lady Kirkcudbright said to me, 'Mr. 'Awkshaw, how well you look ; how that dress becomes you !' I thought that was enough to shut any young feller up."

"Well, Peter, I must say good society is very pleasant. Everybody is so mightily sweet on everybody else ; you never hear a harsh word or see a sour look—it's all smiles and sugar, and one feels all right directly."

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was sunshine in the garden at Monte Carlo. The aloes threw long pointed shadows on the ground as they tapered up into the clear blue of the sky, and the trees and flowering shrubs made softly subdued recesses of shade; while the sweet perfumes filling the air stilled the senses into repose, and seemed to breathe caresses and gentle joy. There Nature and Art had joined hands, and had combined to produce one of the brightest scenes of earth.

Out as far as the eye could reach, the blue Mediterranean lay like a beautiful dream, or like a smile on the face of sleeping beauty, awe-inspiring just because of its calm ; and above gleamed the bright sky, till in the distance the two visions, sea and sky, melted into one, and earth was lost in heaven. But the trail of the serpent was even here, close at hand ; and poor humanity, tempted aside by its wily allurements, has marred the beauty and the image of the Divine idea. In conflict with perfection, struggling against law, he gives the rein to evil instead, and revels in obeying the voice of passion. With features distorted from disappointed greed, from impotent anger, and with a heart bursting with all the meanest feelings of which the human heart is capable—because they are the

gain, as he himself, debased in thought, in language ; women lost to sense of honour and delicacy—all purity gone, all beauty disfigured, all mastery over self lost ; and sees in all the impress of the Divine hand marred ; all presence of soul and of the mind, God-given, gone ; and finds all more like demons or wild beasts than men.

Outside, Nature smiles, toys, breathes, lives—if she may, teaches ; and inside, hour after hour, while the sun gilds sea and mountain-top with beauty and glory, the hateful click of gold, now lost, now won, holds a crowd spell-bound ; and the debased tones of angry voices, of ill-restrained passion sound through the rooms from morn till night. Now and

again, the heated gambler may go forth and snatch a breath of air, but he gains no breath of life from the scene ; he went, perhaps, to hide some intense bitterness, to gain a moment's rest, and then returns with more eager zest than before.

In some such need, Lord Swansea had hurried out, and, looking up for a moment with knitted brow, as from some oppression, saw passing below him, arm-in-arm, deep in talk, pacing slow together, Fanny and Julius. Utter self-contemplation, thorough mutual confidence, a smile from Julius, a merry laugh from Fanny—how it grated on Swansea's ear as it mingled with the sweet air !—a playful movement on Fanny's part, a swift eager rejoinder from Julius.

“ What happy lovers ! ” said Lord Swansea between his teeth, and looked

In a moment the current of his thoughts was changed : the table, the Russian woman, whom he had hated so a moment ago ; even the sound of the money, the discordant voices, the angry-set faces—he saw them no more, only Fanny's face, with her soft happy laugh. How much in keeping she had seemed with the scene, with the brightness around ; how happy ; “how confoundedly contented they both seemed !”

Worse than he was before—angry, dejected, disappointed—the vision left him. In a moment the old hand was over him again : he must drown self, must seek forgetfulness, must be a fool to help him bear life. Back once more to the old place, the old occupation ; passion has

him again, and Fanny's happiness is a gentle irritant to spur him on.

But fortune deserted him. Nothing but loss after loss, and hope became despair, and despair was madness.

That night there was a message from Monte Carlo to Kirkcudbright. Lord Swansea had had heavy losses, he must be paid the sum his friend owed him at once.

Again the sun shone out on Monte Carlo. The soft shades of morning had deepened into noon, the sea had gleaming paths of gold on its surface, and the white sails were like jewels in a glittering setting of blue.

Fanny and Julius sat on a bench drinking in the scene.

It was the second sun that had risen

they were but birds of passage in this paradise.

But the cloud was near them even now.

As they sat there they were not unnoticed. Lord Swansea was hovering near, uncertain what to do. Too much taken up with each other and their happy talk were they to notice passers-by; and he was sitting on a bench some few yards off, and they had not once looked his way. Then he rose, thinking he would go and look after his letters; perhaps they might move from the bench, and they might meet in the walks. He had a hostile wish to speak to Fanny.

There were no letters, but there was a

telegram ; not from Lord Kirkeudbright but from Dick. “The debt should have immediate attention.” But strange to say, there was a telegram also just come for Lady Fanny Hawkshaw. Where was she ? They thought she had left Monaco.

“I know her,” said Lord Swansea. “I am just going to her. I will take it.”

The old English peer, Earl of Swansea and Hawthornden, as he sometimes said, was accustomed to have his way. They gave the telegram to him.

There, on the bench, just as he had left them, still talking and laughing together, sat Fanny and Julius.

“Why, here is Lord Swansea !” said Fanny, with provoking indifference.

Julius got up and went to meet him. Having shaken hands, Swansea came and

“ What is that, Lord Swansea ? ” asked Fanny, catching a glimpse of the malevolent smile on his face, and noticing the letter in his hand.

“ A telegram for you. I was coming out, and thought you would get it quicker if I brought it to you.”

“ How did you know we were here ? ” asked she, taking the telegram, but feeling a sort of repugnance against opening it while he was so close to her.

“ I saw you three days ago, but you had no eyes, no time, for anything but—the scenery.”

“ Isn’t it lovely here ? ” asked Fanny, slightly blushing, and turning then to the telegram.

“ It is a paradise—quite a paradise,”

said Lord Swansea, speaking to Julius.

“Do you stay long ? ”

“We leave to-morrow. We are going to the Lakes, and home,” said Julius.

“It is very lovely here, but I can hardly spare more time than another three weeks from home now.”

“Read that, Julius,” said Fanny, giving him the telegram.

She was standing up, and looked pale and frightened. She turned away from Swansea with a look of such intense repulsion that he started back a step.

“You have done your work, Lord Swansea. My father has had a stroke ; you have killed him ! ”

In the silence that followed Swansea seemed to cringe before her, in her youthful sorrow and indignation.

Even as she spoke she thought of

step had been as she had walked on his arm down the church, how he had put on his best smiles, and had done his best for her sake. Now, here he was, speechless, powerless, more helpless even than Bob Lawley, whom every one had commiserated that day.

“ Could not you wait a little for your money ? ” asked she, turning back sharply upon Swansea. “ Were you in such a hurry ? Or did you want to end my happy dream here ? You were right ; perhaps, I was too happy ” For a moment she was silent, as she gazed out over the distant sea, seeking, perhaps, for that lost happiness that was evading her grasp so soon. “ Or is this your revenge for some hard words I said to

you one night? Ah, Lord Swansea," she added, unutterable contempt in her voice, "you are a true friend and a noble enemy to have. You treated me as a child, did you not? You smiled as you struck to-day, and you smiled that night as you kissed my hand, and said you were no one's foe! Quite true to yourself in that, for you are too great a coward to acknowledge it!"

"I give you my honour, Lady Fanny, I knew nothing of the news of this telegram when I brought it. Here is one I have just now from your brother."

He handed her the message from Dick, in which nothing was said of his father's illness.

"But you knew we were anxious about him; that he was worried, failing, that— Is it possible that a friendship so old, a

who has dared to call himself friend—one who dared to pretend to be my friend—faugh! Lord Swansea, why do it like that? Did you not know it would kill him? But why waste words? I might have known of one whose smiles are as false as yours, his friendship, too, must be falsehood itself!"

"You shall have your money, Lord Swansea," said Julius.

"From Kirkcudbright, yes!—from you, sir, no, thank you."

Fanny laughed outright.

"Lord Swansea playing the magnanimous is something new. In your heart, my lord, I fancy you won't much care where it comes from so long as you get it."

They parted; Lord Swansea standing on the spot where they left him, and looking after them, like a man who had played his last card, and, till fortune send him another hand, knows not how to occupy himself.

So the honeymoon was cut short, and that night Fanny and Julius travelled through to England.

To come back to a house of mourning but lately left in the pride of life and laughter is sad indeed. The rooms that had been so smart for the wedding, so decorated for the ball, were now still and desolate; the faces that had smiled so brightly, the hearts that had laughed, and the tongues that had been so sharp and witty, were now silent and subdued. And Fanny, who had thought over her reception at home and in the country before-

why every one was so kind to her, or to feel glad sometimes that she and Julius were able to help others just from the thorough sympathy and strength they had in each other.

It was wonderful how this illness drew them all altogether : Lady Kirkcudbright was no longer proud, irreconcilable ; she made no distinctions now ; she depended on Julius as much as on Dalton or on Dick, nay more, for he seemed gentler far, more thoughtful, and more considerate for her. Fanny, too, was the old bit of sunshine again, that her mother had missed so sadly at first, and when, in the time of her engagement, conflicting interests and desires had separated them all.

Now the one interest every one had at heart drew them all very near together ; and old pride, old mistakes, were all alike forgotten and forgiven. The hushed voices, the silent watches, the dreary anxiety, the dull dead feeling of despair, made the days trying and weary ; they might have forgotten how to smile if Fanny had not been there.

Once, when her mother was sitting by Lord Kirkcudbright's bedside, and Julius had gone to her, begging her to rest, Fanny came in, as he left the room. There was a look of tenderness on her mother's face, strange to it, and Fanny did not speak at once.

"I have gained a son in your husband, my child," said Lady Kirkcudbright, her low voice breaking through the hushed silence of the room, as she laid her hand on her daughter.

"And you have not lost your daughter, mother, after all."

For a moment they were wrapped in each other's arms; it was a glad reconciliation and free forgiveness of all hard words.

There was a movement on the part of the invalid.

"Hush!" said Fanny rapidly disengaging herself from her mother's embrace.

Lord Kirkcudbright had moved slightly and was looking at them. The poor weary face had a smile on it, and Fanny instinctively went to him and smoothed his pillow. He had not noticed her since she had come back. All at once he seemed to know her, seemed to need her near him. She put her hand in

his, and he seemed to try to draw her to him, and then there was an attempt at speech, an inarticulate sentence, a word.

“Fanny, little Fanny, so you’ve come back to me ! ”

“I’m here, father, dear father—always here.”

He smiled and seemed satisfied, and lay back again without movement or effort. But after that he got better—feeble and helpless enough, but better—and immediate danger was proclaimed over. There was a talk of his getting up, being carried down, and in a day or two Julius asserted his rights, and took Fanny off to her new home at the Priory.

CHAPTER V.

THE first Monday after the return of Julius and Fanny to the Priory was as bright a February morning as any one who loves our English winter could ever wish to see.

Mr. Lawley, by way of compliment to Fanny on her arrival at her new home, had expressed a wish that the hounds should meet at her doors, and as she stood in her habit on the broad stone steps watching the approach of different frequenters of the hunt, she could not help

feeling glad of this early opportunity of making them welcome at the Priory. She had known most of them from her childhood, and though some more or less sharp words had reached her ears from some of them about her engagement to Julius, yet they were forgiven by her long ago, and she was as eager as ever for social kindnesses and small acts of friendship ; and, knowing that perhaps she herself was formerly not quite free from blame in having made too marked distinctions between this acquaintance and that, was now all the more ready to repair her fault, or judge leniently any one who now considered her below their scale.

This meet of the Featherbedfordshire hounds at the Priory had caused much conversation in the county. Some said it was contrived by old Mr. Lawley to pave

to take the hounds now that he himself was failing, and that he did this to give him an interest in them. Then the husbands asked the wives if they would not like to go to the breakfast, and the wives asked the husbands if they were really going to hunt that day, and, when they said they were, whether they were going to the meet, or whether they should not try to fall in with the hounds afterwards ; for a reaction had set in since Lord Kirkcudbright had been pronounced out of danger.

Then there had been a burst of sympathy over the young bride, recalled from her honeymoon to a house of sickness and trouble, and they had really half forgotten that she had dropped

the name of FitzMorris for the less high-sounding one of Hawkshaw. But now this remembrance, and the doubts it occasioned, returned tenfold. How were they to behave themselves towards her ? What claims had she upon them ? and what was expected of them ?

As a Kirkcudbright, did they care enough about her to do homage to her ; or, more literally, to open arms of friendship and of welcome to her ; to shine upon her choice with smiles of approval ? Whether indeed it had been for love of Julius, or merely for love of what Julius possessed—which, as yet, they could not know. Time only tells those truths. Had they not some old scores to pay off against the house of Kirkcudbright ? Had not her ladyship frequently snubbed them —forgotten to call often ?—were not their

autumnal shooting party ! Had not even the girls often seemed to wonder who they were, these excellent county people, and had bowed dubiously either at the station or in the county town, when by chance they had met ? Had not Dalton and Dick often been asked to shoot, and what return invitations had there been ?

The very fact of their having been civil to young Hawkshaw, passing over good people to go down, no one knew how low, was an insult : on thinking it over, the county was not sure whether the marriage itself was not a gross insult. And, after all, thus unreasonably the county reasoned : these Kirkeudbrights !—were they so great, so good, so honourable, that they

were entitled to all homage and subservience?

How different was Lady Kirkcudbright from the Duchess of Arranmore, who only seemed to use her position, and the advantages it gave her, in making people happy! Had not some very strange stories been whispered about Lord Kirkcudbright and his reckless propensities? . . . Well, poor man, the less said now the better, he being so very ill. . . . But had not the tradespeople of Sloborough often complained bitterly about certain bills being left unpaid by certain people? and why should great men enjoy their greatness in this sort of way, and get no blame for it?

Did not complaints also from other quarters come sometimes, borne over the county by the wind, or somehow?—and so why now should Fanny, having moreover

mused they, on second thoughts, would it not be heaping coals of fire on the heads of the Kirkcudbrights, if the county were kind to their Fanny now ?

Coals of fire were out of the county's power before—but now

And, on the other hand, what claims had Fanny on them as a Hawkshaw? None, surely, save those coals of fire. But, who were these Hawkshaws? Snobs, who should be squashed! Fanny was a traitor to her class in joining their ranks, and in endeavouring to lead them forth to victory by placing herself at their head. Still, they were very rich, would surely be affable, would probably give balls and all sorts of things. He was quiet, and quite unobjectionable, the house was lovely,

Fanny was pretty. They were, in fact, a young couple who might be an addition to any neighbourhood; the old people would never be there—Moll might, and Moll was an heiress. The county hesitated.

The marks of toil were nowhere to be seen about Julius; scandal had never breathed a word about ill-gotten gains; Emma mines were things afar off from the Hawkshaws. The hesitation decreased.

Such doubts and such hesitations, such arguments for and against (only expressed more lengthily), were still the order of the day, when Gedge, the huntsman, rode up to the door of the Priory at the head of his hounds on that February morning, and Fanny stepped out to greet them and the rest of the field.

There was a *piquante* look of expectation on her face, as though conscious that

calmly waiting to see the result.

"After all, this is better than Monte Carlo, Julius," said she, as he came and stood beside her for a moment, and they watched the approaching pack, and the field gathering from the different gates of the park.

There were carriages, too, in the distance : pony carriages, phaetons, waggonettes, dog-carts, croydons, and three or four barouches. For some of the ladies of the county had put their heads together, and had decided that they had no idea of their husbands going off on Monday morning at cock-crow, and making running with pretty Lady Fanny at the Priory, while they were left out in the cold. Besides, if they had to call, what a good oppor-

tunity for breaking the ice, and for seeing the house ! So, for these reasons, Lady Fanny had the hunting community of the county, its wives and its daughters, at her feet this morning ; and quietly she smiled to herself, as she knew they all expected a great breakfast with gold plate and "splash" awaiting them, and there was nothing of the kind.

"Why, he's in a black coat," said Lady Douglas to Sir Arthur her husband, peering over the side of her barouche as they drove up.

"Who is?" asked he, thinking more of his hunter just then than of anything else.

"Mr. Hawkshaw."

"Of course he is, what right has he to a red one I should like to know?"

"Oh, I'm sure I don't."

stretched hand, “what will you do?—will you come in? There is no regular breakfast, you know; I hate that sort of thing, so unsporting, don’t you think so?”

“Quite so, Lady Fanny, quite so,” said Sir Arthur.

“Very happy to see you at your new home, Lady Fanny,” added he, rather awkwardly.

“Thank you. Won’t you get out and see it, Lady Douglas? Presently, you know, but don’t go away without coming in.”

Then Fanny turned away to speak to Gedge, and left Lady Douglas to think it over.

There was Mr. Samson, the old squire who had expressed himself so violently

against the marriage to Mr. Lawley, driving up in his tilbury, with his hearty-looking wife beside him.

"Of course, they'll give us a breakfast, John," said she.

"Of course they will; never fear."

But they just had to drink their cherry brandy and etceteras, and to partake of their refreshments outside, while Fanny was the centre of a merry group of sportsmen on the steps, and smiled down on the would-be patronising carriage company from that superior height.

It was a bright scene: the hounds having their roll on the grass in front, or looking up to Gedge for a word of encouragement and recognition; Gedge himself the picture of submissive patronage; Tom, the first whip, and Charles, the second, all smiling a sort of open-mouthed

Lawley; the grooms walking the horses about; the hurried partings of the sportsmen from their hacks, and the hastening to greet Lady Fanny in her charmed circle; her own frank greetings and bright smiles of welcome. No wonder Julius felt proud of his wife that day.

Biggs, the butler, looked as though he would burst with importance, carrying a tray of liqueurs himself, and directing his satellites now to look after Mr. Gedge, now to go to Mrs. Camelford's pony carriage and ask her what she'd take, now just to make haste and get out of the way, for here was her Grace the Duchess coming.

Yes; though Dick alone represented Kirkcudbright, the kind-hearted Duchess

could not let her Fanny want support this morning.

"Though hounds are not at all in my line," exclaimed she, as she extricated her fat little person from the mass of rugs in which it had been enveloped, and came up the steps, "I could not resist this bright morning; so here I am."

And there, behind her, was Lord Tarleton.

"He asked himself down, dear," explained the Duchess in an irritated tone, "and I, immensely flattered, jumped at it, and telegraphed 'Come.' And when he came he confessed it was not for me at all, but because he wanted to see you and your new *ménage*."

"That is a friend indeed!" said Fanny, clasping his hand.

The Duchess smiled at Fanny's evident pleasure.

really do want to see—that is all I want to say.”

And then a knot of them being assembled—consisting of Lady Douglas, Mrs. Sefton, Mrs. Parker, Lady Anne Clavering, the Bateses, Camelfords, Miss Rosanna Weatherwax, Sir Hercules Stanley, Miss Stanley, the Kemps, Farrers, Browns, Stevens, Cooks, Miss Gauntlet, and some more—Lady Fanny threw her eye over them with a sort of field-marshall look, and asked them if they would like to come and see the house.

There was a delighted assent from the ladies, a murmur from the men, who wanted to be off, a sympathizing nod from Fanny, which said, as plain as tongue could speak it, “I won’t

be long," and then she led the way inside.

All through the great hall, with the pictures and the statues; a glimpse of the dining-room, a look at the library; and then through the gallery, where Fanny raised her voice to show the echo; then allowed them a sniff at the conservatory, as she said; through the two great drawing-rooms, where she had once first found herself dreaming; just to her own little boudoir beyond, which had the widest and most extended view of the county of any house in it, and was itself a room delicious in its furniture and decorations.

"I never saw so pale a blue in all my life," said Lady Douglas curiously.

"I should live here if I had it," said the Duchess.

with Mrs. Camelford.

"Oh, certainly; if furniture and blue satin make happiness, she is the happiest woman in England," said Lord Tarleton.

"Look here—Gedge and the hounds will go wild, and so will Dick. I must go, Duchess. Will you? . . . I don't like . . ."

"All right, dear. What a child you are still! Now, do you call this doing your duty by your neighbours, who have so kindly driven over?"

"No, I know it's all wrong. I ought not to be in a hurry; it looks so ungrateful. But you see——"

"There—just go! I see Julius coming for you."

A moment more, and they saw her

caracoling on Go-lightly's back across the park, Dick and Julius beside her, and the rest of the sportsmen spreading over the park in the rear.

A little later, and the carriages are again filled with their occupants, bent on pursuing the chase on wheels, and the Duchess and Lord Tarleton stand on the steps, waving their hands to the last of the visitors, most of whom had never been seen by either of them before that day.

"And this is how Fanny does the honours of the Priory," said her Grace, smiling, as she took her place in the carriage, and they drove back to Bolton together.

"The Duchess called him Julius, did you hear?" said Mrs. Farrer to Mrs. Sefton, as the ladies streamed out of the house.

just as well be civil, too, and make the best of it."

Meanwhile the hunt was sweeping away to the gorse just on the other side of the park.

During the detention of Mr. Lawley in his sick room, the hunting field had become rather unmanageable.

The country had, indeed, been hunted by committee, with Mr. Samson and Mr. Bates at its head, and the subscriptions and affairs had been properly looked after; but, out in the field, the lack of the master was often felt; there was no one to keep order, and sometimes, even in the best of fields, there will be found some eager spirits, glorying in a forward

place, when they are right over the line, or cleverly preventing the fox from breaking, by surrounding, like sentinels on picket, the cover, whence he cannot escape. The field was apt to take too much upon itself; each man thought he was capable of viewing a fox away, of putting the hounds on, certainly of making a noise, as well as any one else, and often the day's sport suffered from this over anxiety to do something on the part of its votaries. They were for ever forgetting the old adage about too many cooks spoiling the broth.

In Mr. Lawley's day, he commanded perfect obedience; they trusted and respected him too much to venture on any dissent, nor, indeed, did they desire to put forward any opinion contrary to his; but now every man had an opinion,

Gedge had barely put his hounds into the gorse than Melody and Rachel gave ample testimony that Charley was at home.

“Yap ! yap !” went Rachel.

“Yap ! yap !” answered Melody, tearing round to her, in the wildest state of excitement.

“Tally-ho !” screams Sir Hercules Stanley, who had seen a bit of yellow fur in the furze.

“You fool !—hold your tongue, can’t you ?” shouted Mr. Bates, losing command of himself.

“Get away from there, can’t you ?” calls Mr. Samson. “How’s he to get away with your ugly faces round the cover ?”

“Here he is!” shouts a keeper.

“Come away, men.”

“Let him go.”

“Don’t stand there, my man,” said Dick, “let him out.”

“They wants him out the other side, sir—over there.”

“Come away, I tell you. Come in, Fanny.”

“Why, who’s this, riding along? Why, bless my heart alive, it’s Julius! Can’t you keep still, man?”

But one side was nearly clear, and across the ride Charley bounded, with Little Lady and Melody close at his heels.

Again the same scene was enacted: Gedge was here, there, and everywhere; Mr. Bates and Mr. Samson were purple with excitement, till suddenly Sir Arthur

them the fox had broke.

"Forrard, away! Tally-ho! Tally-ho!"

There was Charley indeed, well away from the cover, running in view.

"He's making for the woodland," said Dick.

A glorious stretch over the park, then clearing the fence beyond they found themselves in Bumper Wood, and the hounds seemed at fault. They hoped they were going to rattle through it. But hark! there was a whimper.

"Hark, my Little Lady! hark-forrard, Little Lady!" said Gedge.

"That's it," said Mr. Camelford, who wasn't a hunting parson, but came out just to see the sport.

And they were on again.

A fence and a drop that required some doing, and there, in the field beyond, were Dick and Mr. Samson in the wildest excitement, for Rachel was running away with the scent seemingly, all by herself, while the rest of the pack were back again into the wood.

Dick screamed with his hand in his ear, and Mr. Samson screamed with his hand in his ear.

"That's it," said Fanny.

"For pity's sake," said Dick, with a face of agony, as though tears must flow in a moment, "get the hounds back!"

He looked at those impassioned faces around him.

Julius rode leisurely up.

"That's it," said Sir Arthur Douglas, coming up, having avoided the fence and the drop. He put his finger in his ear and screamed.

around at the helpless sportsmen, and then Dick set off, followed helter-skelter by everybody else—clearing a hedge, crossing some plough, and then plunged once more into the woodland, emerging on the other side to see the tails of some horses and some red-coats disappearing over the brow of the hill. The rest of the pack had a line beside Rachel.

“Come along, Fan,” shouted he, clapping spurs into his horse.

“Come along, Julius,” called she, catching up Dick as she spoke.

Over the open, now clearing a fence or two, now flying a broad ditch, now passing Mr. Samson, who was pounded and panting, skirting the edge of Bromley Gorse, rattling through “Junipers,” they came to

Mr. Clavering's park, where a huge post and rails stopped Gedge, and, while he was describing a circle to circumvent it, the hounds lost the line.

"Why, Gedge, man, if Mr. Lawley had been out you would have taken it."

Gedge grinned and said never a word.

"Mr. Lawley would have taken it himself."

There was grumbling and recrimination, while Julius in his heart sympathised with Gedge.

But presently Chatterbox gave tongue.

"What hound is that?"

"To be depended on?"

"Hark-forrard, Chatterbox! good Chatterbox!"

She whimpered again.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Bates, with his hand up.

who had just caught them up.

And then another hound spoke to it.

“That’s it,” said Dick.

Off they all scampered again.

Julius laughed in his heart. Hunting was not his line exactly, but he liked to see Fanny so happy, and he thanked his stars that she had Dick to-day to give her a lead.

And this time there was no mistake about it.

The scent was good, and the pace was rattling.

Along Stratton End, through Whimper Spinnies, where more than one sportsman came to grief at a newly-made-up fence ; then over the open, down through some deep water meadows, where Mr. Samson

knew better than most people, and showed Julius the way by a good safe lane, enabling both to breathe their horses; and after that a fence or two more, and then a satisfactory kill in the open, close by Woolton's farm.

It was forty minutes and more; and after sandwiches had been discussed, and flasks delivered of their contents—

“How did you like that drop, Dick?”

“Did you have that fence out of the Spinnies?” and such like questions asked and answered, the field trotted off to find another fox, and Fanny and Julius turned home.

There was not one there who did not send good wishes after her, or who did not express satisfaction somehow that she would grace their happy hunting fields of Featherbedfordshire for many a long day yet.

last pull at his flask.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Samson.

"I mean she's free of that Kirkcudbright lot, whom I never could abide."





CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning rather a pathetic little scene was enacted in the breakfast-room at the Priory.

Fanny, who had been out early, coming in now from the conservatory and seeing Julius there, remembered how proud she had felt of her home yesterday when showing it to the county, or at least those members of it who had been inquisitive enough to come.

“ You know, Julius, money and possessions are not really my mania, but

do you know I was so grateful to you for giving it all to me."

But Julius was reading a letter, and he did not at once answer or look up.

So she just stepped beside him, putting her hand on his arm.

"A cloud on your brow, my lord?" said she playfully. "What is it?"

"A letter from my father," said he, in a tone half of irritation, half of amusement, "and really I don't know what to say."

"Let me see it."

"Well, no, Fan. I don't think I shall."

"Tell me, then."

"I don't know even that I shall do that."

“ Then what will you do ? ”

“ And yet it is not fair to answer it without telling you.”

“ What is it, Julius ? ”

He met her gaze for a moment.

“ He wants to come here.”

“ So soon, Julius ! ” and Fanny pouted, then turned away, pressing her face against the window-pane to hide her vexation.

“ That is what I think. It is too soon. I cannot ask him here yet. We have had no holiday. It is not fair.”

There was a silence, while Fanny strove against herself. Was this what she had preached to herself ? Was she not now a Hawkshaw ? Had she not always told herself that Mr. and Mrs. Hawkshaw were to be henceforward considered sacred—that they were no longer subjects for

her superiority of station—by selfish petulance ? And had she not often told herself that she now really liked and admired Mr. Hawkshaw ; for, besides his great qualities of industry, honesty, perseverance, and generosity, had she not often openly exclaimed “ He has such a good heart ! ”

“ What does he say, Julius ? ” asked she at length in a low voice. He put the letter into her hands.

“ We will answer it as you like, Fan.”

“ MY DEAR Ju,— (thus ran the letter) I hear you have come back to the Priory now, so I hope my Lord is better. I want to see you, my boy, after your foreign travels. I always did like hearing about foreign parts, you know, though I’ve never

found time to go much. And I want to know about your establishment and yourselves. How is it all doing? And how is Fanny? Well, I hope, and buxom and bright as ever. Ju, I wish you'd run up to town and just see me, my boy, and tell me all about it. I should like to come and see you just for a day or two, but, after all, between you and I, I don't like to. It's hard that I should be saying this to you, Ju, but she's not one of us, and I feel it. I felt it would be so before, and now, since you've been married, I've felt it more than ever. Of course I'm mighty proud of her and her handle to her name, and mighty glad that my boy should have the gal of his choice, but she's not one of us. Not that she wasn't always mighty winning and pleasant and civil to me and to your mother; but still, Ju, it isn't the

expect that—or ever to be anything but a gulf fixed between us two. You'll say I'm a foolish old man, Ju. Run up to London, do, and see Moll and your mother, and just tell us how you're looking. Your mother and I and Moll send our most kind and respectful regards to Fanny.

“Your affectionate old father,

“PETER HAWKSHAW.”

Fanny's duty seemed to her clear : she took no time to consider it. Impulsively she turned to Julius—

“Order the carriage, won't you, and let me come with you ! I want to tell him I can be no gulf between you !”

“ What ! you don’t want to come all the way to London ? ”

“ Yes, I do. They are like hens without their chickens ; they think they have lost you. Let me do right. He has been a good father to you, Julius.”

“ But have you thought, Fanny ? Suppose he and Moll should want to come here now.”

“ Well, they must come.”

“ They shall not stay long.”

“ Hush, Julius ! They never wanted me ; they only suffered me for you : and yet they welcomed me warmly. They are my duty now as much as yours.”

“ It will never do, Fanny ; you’ll never stand them.”

“ How do you know what I can stand ? Are they so very different from you ? Has Oxford and education refined you into

upon."

That evening, when Julius followed Fanny into the drawing-room of the London house where the Hawkshaws were then staying, and as he saw the surprised gleam of pleasure cross his father's face, he thanked her in his heart for coming.

"You did not like to come to see us, Mr. Hawkshaw," said Fanny simply, putting her hand in his; "I am bolder, you see, and I have come with Julius to see you."

Peter Hawkshaw was almost too astonished for words, and then Mrs. Hawkshaw rose and both pressed their warm welcomes on Fanny.

"What! and you're not too grand to come and look the old people up?" said Peter at last. "You have a heart, and a warm one, after all."

"I hope you'll find it so," said Fanny, laughing.

"I'm sorry I wrote that letter now, and yet I ain't. But I was dull and mopish like, and I wanted to see Ju."

"And he didn't like to come down," put in Mrs. Hawkshaw.

"But he must come down, whenever he wants to, and so must you all. The Priory is too big and too beautiful for me and Julius to keep it to ourselves."

"Sometimes, now, in looking at you, Lady Fanny," said old Hawkshaw—(this was after dinner, when dessert was on the table, and the servants had gone)—"I get thinking that an idea of mine may some day come true."

“Why, that some day all classes may be one, all distinctions may be broken away, and that a gentleman may be known for himself, instead of what he seems.”

“But we all seem to be what we are not, often,” said Fanny, who had with some difficulty repressed a shudder at this ambitious “hidea” of Mr. Hawkshaw.

“Of course, father, the more knowledge spreads, and the more discoveries are made, the more all humanity becomes equal, and all class distinctions are annulled,” said Julius. “We all know that.”

“You do see it more and more every year,” said Fanny.

"I think science is the greatest leveller that the world has ever known or felt," said Julius again. "Look at gunpowder, now; did not that destroy the old feudal warfare, the castles, the dependants, the little army each haughty baron used to keep."

"Hark at Ju!" said Mrs. Hawkshaw.

"Think of the knights in their armour, on their prancing horses, meeting each other in hand-to-hand combat—think of the one vying with the rest in the glory and blaze of magnificence, and in the strength of their retinue—what has become of all that? Think of the supremacy that proud cavalry, that trampling aristocracy, had over the poorly-clad, hastily-armed militia!"

"I dunno so much about those times, Ju," said his father, "but think of print-

coveries, and the power they give us—
common property to us all."

"Well, papa, I'm not sure that I quite think with you and Ju," said Moll. "I know a gentleman a mile off; his very way of speaking is different; his voice is quite another thing. Give me one of the clerks in your office, as sharp as a needle, and knowing ever so much, I dare say, and give me Lord Dalton, and I know which is the highest of the two."

"But Lord Dalton, begging your wife's pardon, Ju, wouldn't suit me at all in my office; he'd be a reg'lar ninny there."

"I dare say he would," said Fanny, laughing.

"He has never given his mind to it," said Moll. "But, put them standing

together, I say, and though, I dare say, learning and knowledge and thought are very fine things, yet they don't make a gentleman."

"But, perhaps, a gentleman might be all the better gentleman for having them," said Fanny.

"Bravo!" said Peter. "A little mingling, a little taking off from this, a little adding on to that. Oh, it'll come! That's my dream, that's 'ow modern history will be written. Class 'armonised with class, distinctions squashed, and the same joys and advantages shared by all."

"Advantages, father?" queried Julius.

"Yes. Education may do it. Look at yourself, Ju."

"But, then, see how particular we've been with him, Peter."

"I don't think education only, does it,

“Oh yes, good soil for the seed to fall on ; and then I can’t see why all should not enjoy alike beautiful things, and the advantages—social, political, and intellectual—that mind gives. I don’t see why the time should not come when a man, any man, may become the best, the highest creature that the good God has made him. I read that somewhere the other day put differently. Work does it ; work does everything.”

“It does a great deal, certainly,” said Fanny. “I always think we could do almost anything if we were really to try. I like to look upon the human mind as a piece of elastic, which will stretch out and out, according to the will, to a great length—God looking on. There is a

limit, but we do not see it, and when we try to outstretch that limit, it breaks. When I see a stupid ignorant person—hale, hearty, well, happy, but not very scientific, and not very intelligent—then I say to myself, ‘He has never stretched out his piece of elastic.’”

This won old Peter Hawkshaw’s heart, and he chuckled loudly over it.

“A piece of elastic indeed; so it is, so it is!”

“And there’s poor Moll,” said Mrs. Hawkshaw presently, *à propos* of nothing, “been longing for a little country air, and been a-mewking and a-puking for being only along of us old folk; but I told her she couldn’t always have young people with her. You see, she isn’t looking well, is she?”

“Would you like to come down with us,

“Shouldn’t I be in your way?” asked Moll, colouring with pleasure. “I should like it immensely.”

“Well then, that’s settled. We’ll go down together to-morrow evening.”

Next day, however, walking in the street, Fanny met an old friend, a married daughter of Lady Castletree.

“You in London! I had no idea of it.”

“No. I’m only up for the night.”

Then she introduced Julius.

“Say two nights, and come to my party this evening.”

They were persuaded.

It was a Spelling Bee, and a squash. As Fanny would go to a play first, she was too late for the spelling. The prizes

were being given away as she and Julius entered the room.

"Who's that?" asked a young man of his friend, staring at Fanny.

"Oh, don't you know? That's old Kirkcudbright's daughter, who married some ruffian down in the country for his money. She seems to thrive on it, doesn't she?"

A few minutes later, when she was talking to an acquaintance, she saw Lord Swansea.

He was looking at her, she knew it, felt it, and she made a slight sign of recognition. They had not met since Monte Carlo, but Fanny never bore malice, and was ready to be friendly now.

Lord Swansea, however, turned away, and Fanny's greeting died on her lips as she scanned his averted face.

hate sham, and what is the use of pretending to be friends after all."

As some well-known faces met her sight, she was amused to see how much she was noticed; she was being talked about and commented upon.

"Is it my grand dress," thought she to herself, "or my jewels and look of affluence? Is it the lost 'caste' they deplore?"

Lady Fanny kept her ears open to hear.

"There is the money, you know!" said a former ardent admirer of hers, an Admiralty clerk.

"It becomes her," was the answer.

"They say she will be the rage this

year, a new beauty, in fact; diamonds and wealth are so attractive, too."

"No, I shan't," said Fanny, turning to her former admirer with outstretched hand, the old love of mischief twinkling in her eyes; "I shan't be the rage this year; I am not coming up at all this year. There is a loss for you!"

Confusion precluded much answer, and Fanny went on her way rejoicing.

"Well, but one must be consistent," said a voice Fanny knew, close to her ear. "The fact is, one goes and calls upon those sort of people because they are rich, or because one wants something, and then one is surprised if they think themselves your equals, or if they want to marry your daughter, or to be on terms of friendship with you."

"I don't like snobs, Lady Castletree;

in fact, a miserable sort of anomaly, a wretched insect without wings, no butterfly, and not even an honest caterpillar."

It was Lord Swansea who was speaking.

Lady Fanny turned sharply and faced them, these two old acquaintances of hers.

"I stand corrected. I am the snob, and my smart gown provides the objectionable adjective, and makes me a swell snob. I am that miserable sort of anomaly, Lord Swansea—no 'wings to bear me over,' not even an honest worm. May I be a wasp, I wonder, with handsome gold wings and ever so much of a sting?"

After all, the party was not much fun.

As Fanny went to the station next evening, with Julius and Moll, on their way to the Priory, she was not sorry to be leaving London, to be going back to the flowers and the blessed free country, where people seem to leave you alone ever so much more, and not to care quite so much what exact position in society you hold, or how much you have a year.

“ How much a year indeed ! what does it matter ? ” thought Fanny to herself, as she walked up and down the platform, left to herself for awhile, the other two having gone to get the tickets.

Fanny stood still, waiting for Moll, and watched the busy people bustling to and fro, watched the heavy, dreary faces of the waiting women, the flaring gas-light, and listened to the different cries of the

Lord Dalton !

What a revelation !

Fanny leaned against the wall to steady herself, and instinctively took advantage of the concealment which the shadow made by a half-open door offered.

They came nearer ; Dalton was holding Kate's hand in his, it rested on his arm, he was looking into her face.

As for that face, it was altered ; half its beauty was gone. Pale, thin—miserably thin—Kate looked the very shadow of her former self ; the lustre of her eyes was the same, and there was the tender expression that had won Fanny, playing about her mouth ; but it was Kate old, unhappy, changed. She was dressed in

black, with a shawl thrown loosely about

Boulterian Library		Use pencil or ballpoint pen	Complete items 1 - 9	Incomplete forms will not be processed
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4. VOLUME NUMBER(S) (consecutive numbers only)		1043	5. DATE(S) OF PUBLICATION	1833
6. READER'S NUMBER		4482	7. READER'S NAME (block letters)	John Sprague
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And then, too, Fanny saw something else. This was what her pride of position and station had come to!—this was what they, the Kirkcudbrights, were! She—Fanny—who had held her head up so high—oh, she had had reason indeed! Where was the name and the pure Norman blood which she had jestingly prided herself on to Julius? Where was the noble family into which he had married?

Lady Fanny hated herself—her name. She thought she could never face Julius again; she thought she could never see any one again—never again hold up her head—never dare to take her place.

again amongst those honest Hawkshaws, who had received her so warmly and so credulously.

Once before—about that money—she had blushed before Julius, for her brother. Never had she thought then that the name of Kirkcudbright would cause her such bitter pangs of shame as she felt to-day! Never again could she be proud of her old name; never cite her family, or say she had lost “caste;” never feel aught but honest gratitude for what Julius let her be, and hate the falsely seeming thing she now, in the first bitterness of discovery, thought she had been.

A porter rang a bell, and she crept out of the shadow.

“Oh, there you are!” said Julius’s clear ringing tones.

"Come," said Fanny quickly, and almost pulled Julius into a carriage after her, much to Moll's discomfiture, who had spied Lord Dalton, too, and wanted to go with him.

All the way down, steaming along in the darkness, Fanny was silent and reserved.

Julius and Moll were astonished at the change that had come over her: driving through the streets in London Fanny had been so gay and light-hearted, but now she had not a word for them.

For Dalton to have done this thing! Her heart beat still with indignation, and she was quivering with pain and disgust. Dalton!—the elder brother, whom the rest

had always looked up to, and whom Fanny had always believed in till there had come that debt to Julius, forgiven now long ago! But Dalton!—the son whom her mother had trusted, and of whom they had all been so proud; the right arm of the house; who was so popular in London; whose friends were legion; and who always bolstered up any party in town or country, by producing “one of the most popular fellows of the day” at a moment’s notice! Dalton’s taste, Dalton’s opinion, Dalton’s co-operation, had been all-powerful, necessary—everything; and meanwhile, in fact, this was what he was! This was he to whom Fanny had sooner appealed than to any one; to whom Fanny’s childish trials and troubles had all been told; whom Fanny had always thought

fellow, the favourite, the comrade ; but Dalton had always been regarded as the one with authority, with power. Meanwhile, this was what he was ! It was a rude waking for her to find sin in such a vile aspect in one so near, so dear.

The intensity of the pain seemed to increase as the silence and the darkness grew around her. When they reached the station, where both the Kirkcudbright and the Priory carriages were waiting, it was no wonder that Fanny turned from Dalton as though she had been stung.

“ Won’t you speak to me ? ” asked he, with his old soft voice, that just now had a touch of wonder in it.

No ! Fanny could not speak to him.

She walked away quickly, and heard

him talking to Moll and Julius, and heard Julius say—

“ Come over soon, Dalton ; ”
And heard Dalton answer—
“ Yes, I shall be over to-morrow.
Tell Fanny so.”

That night, Julius was surprised to see Fanny sitting in a low chair in front of a dying fire in her dressing-room. She was not reading or doing anything ; she certainly was not warming herself. When he came up to her, he found she was crying.

“ What’s the matter, child ? ”
“ I shall never speak to Dalton again.”
“ Why ? ” asked he, flushing. A suspicion crossed his mind.
“ I saw—to-night—Kate—my beautiful Kate—walking with him ! ”

time," said he at last.

He did not know what to do; he wanted to quiet her, and yet it was so difficult to say he had known it. He did not want to seem to uphold Dalton for half a second even.

"You knew it—Kate?" stammered she.

"Once, a long time ago, I saw him go into Ivy Cottage. I guessed it rather than knew it. He shook me off—would be alone—and then I saw him go there. It was then I thought I knew it."

"Oh, Julius—and . . . you spoke to him still, married me still, have borne it. . . . How could you marry me, knowing I had such a brother?" asked she, sud-

denly rising. “ How could you bear my mother’s taunts about connection and an old family name ? Why did you not say to the whole neighbourhood what in fact we were ? ”

“ Fanny, dear, you take it too deeply to heart. There are plenty of sinners in the world—— ”

“ And does that make it any better ? That Dalton, my brother !—one who has been brought up . . . one who said he loved me, one I trusted and dared to be proud of—oh, Julius !—it is worse instead of better that he should be one of such vulgar, base sinners ! ”

“ You are very proud, after all, Fanny.”

“ I don’t know whether it is pride or what, but it is fearful to be brought lower than everything one has ever thought to be, by one’s own blood—not by misfortune

And to Kate, too! ”

“ You loved her, Fanny? ”

“ Who could help it? And to think that her life—hers, that I was trying to brighten and to console—had been ruined by my brother! Oh, Julius—what will you do? I am not fit to be your wife. That it should have come to this—that I, who dared to think myself high, who was proud of what I was, should feel myself to be brought so low! ”

“ Why, child, how you torment yourself! It is yourself I loved, not what you were and how high you stood. Do you think I care for your family name or position?—nor, dear, would it greatly matter to me, save for your warm heart’s

sake, whether all your relations and ancestors had been hung on a gibbet, or buried in Westminster Abbey, so long as I am sure that you can care for me still."

After that Fanny brightened up a bit.

"I should laugh now, Julius, if I were not so very miserable; only you are wrong about that gibbet, you know," said she; and next morning, when the servants told her that Lord Dalton was in the library, she went down at once, having quite made up her mind what she would do.



CHAPTER VII.

BUT Lord Dalton was not in the library. And Lady Fanny was counting rather without her host when she ran downstairs to meet him, having made up her mind what to do. For, standing in the middle of the untenanted room, wondering what had become of her brother, she soon became aware of a conversation going on in an undertone in the next room. The door was open, and a step or two brought her in full view of a large mirror in which were reflected the figures of Moll and Lord Dalton.

Lord Dalton was extended full length on a sofa holding a skein of red worsted, which Moll, sitting at his feet on a low chair, was winding off rapidly.

Something disgusted at having to wait, and not feeling inclined to break in upon this capture of Moll's, which she had so effectually attained by means of the worsted, Fanny sat down to wait till they came to the end of the skein.

"I am afraid you repent already, Lord Dalton," Moll was saying. "You are tired of my winding."

"On the contrary, I never was so happy in my life. I have heard of silken fetters and golden fetters, and have always avoided them; worsted fetters I had never heard of, but I see they're the things, and I don't care how long I wear them."

them break."

Fanny saw Moll blush, and a silence followed.

"Thank you very much," said Moll presently, as the skein came to an end, and the bright ball lay on her lap.

Dalton took hold of it, and threw it up in the air.

And then Moll put out her hand for it.

"What a pretty bracelet that is you have on. May I look?"

Her hand was captive in his.

"You hurt me," said Moll in a low voice; and, in a moment more, "Let me go."

"Your pardon, my prisoner," said Dalton, and before she was aware, he had kissed her lips.

Fanny started to her feet, but a second glance at their faces stopped her. Swift blushes were crimsoning Moll's downcast face, yet, withal, there was a smile hovering there. She was not angry, only silent and frightened—and happy. This was dreadful ! As for Dalton, he looked thoroughly ashamed of himself. Why wasn't Moll angry ? It would have been so much easier if she had been. Then he could have showered down a torrent of reproaches on his own head ; no language would have been bad enough for his infamous conduct; and, with something like dignity even, he might have taken his loathed presence from her sight. But Moll stood there, silent, smiling, crimson—and waiting. This was dreadful !

It was a positive relief when the footman came in, and said that her ladyship

must be put between Moll and Dalton, that she could only see him with closed doors, and that without the remotest possibility of intrusion.

Dalton gladly obeyed her message.

"Why wouldn't you speak to me last night at the station, Fan?" asked he, lounging in rather indifferently.

"Just shut the door, would you?"

He shut it.

"Are you going to marry Moll, Dalton?"

He twirled his moustache to hide his surprise and annoyance, and to gain time to answer.

"No, I think one Hawkshaw in the family is enough."

“ Why do you flirt with her, then ? ”

“ Heiress ! Our mother started it, you know, and one can’t drop a girl like a hot potato—bad form. Besides, it gives one credit with fellows. She’s a fine girl, too, Fanny, and likes me, I do believe. But, of course, it’s only an amiable farce after all.”

“ Why do you kiss her, then ? ”

Fanny had pretended to be writing, and as she said this she looked up from the paper, and fixed her eyes on her brother’s face.

“ Bother you, Fanny ! Have you been playing the eaves-dropper ? ”

“ On the contrary, what I saw by chance frightened me so much that I ran away at once and sent for you to follow me.”

Lord Dalton did not answer ; he felt uncomfortable. Fanny had always had

her to care for you if you don't want to marry her. I think you have done enough mischief already, Dalton, without doing any more."

"What do you mean? Do you want me to marry her?"

"Certainly not!"

"Do you want me to marry anybody? What is the matter with you this morning, Fanny?"

"I should like you to be true, that is all."

"Good heavens! what do you mean? Don't talk in riddles; do you know anything? Last night I thought that, perhaps, as you did not speak to me, that——"

"Don't be afraid, you are right. Last night I saw Kate and you together."

Dalton put his hands in his pockets, and faced her, waiting for her to go on.

"You have ruined Kate; you have given her a life full of misery, and tied a millstone to her neck; and then the first thing the next morning you come and make love to another girl, and try to make her love you, too."

"For Heaven's sake, be still, Fanny; you'll drive me mad! I have not ruined Kate. I love her, I tell you; she is part of my life, and always must be so. By the by, how do you know her name is Kate?"

Then Fanny got up from the writing-table; they could not go on shouting at each other across the room like this; and she came and stood beside him on the

Dalton. She came down last summer to Ivy Cottage, when you were abroad—came, I see it now, to be near you, and lest you deserted her . . . sick of not hearing. I understand the heavy, weary looks she wore sometimes, and why she was so bright later ; and I, riding out on Snail one day, met her picking blackberries, and little Harold perched upon the branch of a tree over her head. I don't know what it was, Dalton, but it must have been her pretty, gentle ways, so unlike anybody else, besides her pretty face, that attracted me, and I fell in love with her straight. And I forced my way into Ivy Cottage, and would go and see her, though she did her best to keep

me out—not thinking it honourable, I suppose! I see it all now. My heart bled for her, living out her lonely, deserted little life there; a life that had been so pure, so innocent, so simple, now flecked and stained, as she would say to me sometimes, beyond all cleansing. And, Dalton, how I hated him—the man who had done this thing! Think of one of hell's spirits going to heaven and dragging out for ever one of God's angels—shutting the gates of paradise for ever and ever—bringing, just by his own selfishness, a doom of eternal woe on one of those pure ones; so I regarded him! I hated him!"

"And you never knew?"

"Not till last night."

Dalton threw himself into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

the Catholic chapel for warmth and light. But since, she has longed for that cold respectable life again. He took away her world, her father, her friends ; he had not even given himself in exchange. Never was woman so alone. She told me the story of the carved angel—that alone should have stopped him. To pull her down from her pedestal thus, to cast her out——!”

“For Heaven’s sake, stop, Fanny ! I cannot bear it.”

“But, Dalton, it was so pathetic ;—the poor little life she made for herself here. Her baby Harold, that used to come crooning to me, and now—what is his life to be ?——”

A dog barked outside, and broke the chain of thought.

“And her work, her carving ; the clothes for the children. It was all exquisite, and all intense suffering, though she never said so. She made the best of it—the very best she could—she never repined ; she did what good she could ; and when they were unkind, harsh to her, called her ‘the pariah of the parish,’ then she turned her thoughts to London itself, and worked for what she called ‘the children of the world.’ ‘There are so many of them, poor things,’ she said to me once. That was her life, and through it all she loved him still.”

Was that a sob from Dalton ? Fanny looked at him curiously.

“What would you have me do, Fanny ?”

“I have hated an unknown being for months, and now, since last night, I have hated you. Forgive me, Dalton; but I took such a fancy to her, and she was the embodiment of all that was pure and good and innocent. How could I help hating any one who had done her harm?”

“ You would not have me marry her, would you ? ”

“ What else can you do, Dalton ? To me it seems the very least you can do.”

“ But think, Fanny, for as yet you have not thought.”

“ Yes, I have ; what does it all matter, in comparison with doing right, and with one human life ? ”

“ I have thought often, and dared not. Think of the world, and what it will say ; think of the family, think of my mother, who means me to reinstate the name and estate by a great marriage, instead of pulling it down by marrying a Dissenting preacher’s daughter.”

“ But you could not be happy so, Dalton ? Would not Harold’s cry sound in your ears sometimes, and Kate’s face haunt you ? Besides, is that reinstating the family, when this stigma would be against you for ever ? Come, Dalton, do it, and at once ; Julius and I will come to the wedding.”

“ Can you answer for Julius like that ?”

“ Most assuredly I can ; he cares for nothing so much as honourable conduct,” answered she, with her head in the air.

“ Is that a return shaft, Fan, to my

an unhandsome remark of yours, considering how freely Julius forgave you that £500."

"But, of course, I mean to pay him."

"Oh, yes, of course you do!"

"Could I face it?" asked Dalton more of himself than of Fanny.

"If not," said she suddenly, "you are no brother of mine, and I will tell the whole world so! Did I think of appearances, and of what people said, when I married Julius; and have I ever regretted it? If you marry her I will stand by you for ever, and so will Julius."

That a Kirkcudbright should have to come to a Hawkshaw for protection! Alas! the world is turning topsy-turvy.

—

Was Julius much protection, after all ? Fanny thought not, as she left the boudoir and, Dalton in it, for outside she met Julius just come in from hunting, with hat knocked in, and mud all over his clothes.

“ Had a fall ? ” asked she merrily.

“ Yes, that I have. Went straight over Napoleon’s head.”

“ What fun ! ” said she. “ But not hurt at all, I hope ? ”

While he went away grumbling, to change, Fanny went back to Moll.

She wanted to tell her, before she was a minute older, that she must not waste any interest on Dalton. If it might be possible, she wished to explain this to Moll without going into farther details ; but it was a delicate subject, and Fanny was not sure how Moll might take it.

which alarmed her, and which warned her, that for the girl's peace of mind, no time should be lost.

Moll was sitting with her back to the door, with her feet on the fender, and an open book on her knee. She was not reading—but a book at hand spares you talking, when you had rather lose yourself in day-dreams, or build castles in the air.

And with such dreams she was busying herself.

She was just a little angry with Fanny for having called Dalton away just as he was undoubtedly coming to the point, but Fanny had done it thoughtlessly; there had been no confidences exchanged be-

tween them on the subject, and Fanny had not known.

Moll could wait. She was sure now that he loved her ; he had been so eager, so almost passionate, he had so far forgotten himself ; and he had been so undisguisedly glad to find her alone when he had come into the room ; oh, there was no doubt about it.

Lady Dalton !—how nice it sounded after Moll Hawkshaw ! And how would it be ? They would live in a little house in London, she supposed ; they would probably lead the fashion there ; people would be calling and leaving cards all day—dukes and all sorts of grand people would be doing that, and they would all be struggling to come to her parties. For Moll would give parties, certainly she would. And it would be much nicer

was nowhere else to go to, than to live there always.

It must be horribly dull there, Moll thought. And then Lady Kirkcudbright was so freezing. But Moll would not be too grand, not too disagreeable and worldly, oh, no ! She would be kind to some old friends, she would do good by her position, she would give this one a lift, and stretch out a helping hand to that one. Dalton would let her do that. He was so nice, and thoroughly kind and good ; no one had ever appreciated Moll as he did, no one had ever made life seem so well worth having as he had, no one had ever seemed to her so perfect, so worth liking, nay, worth loving



with her whole woman's heart, as he did.

Just then Fanny came in, and stood on the hearth-rug looking down gravely into Moll's face. Then, rather wanting to screen her own, she went round behind Moll's chair, and leaning her arms on the back of it, said—

“ You don't care about Dalton, do you, Moll ? He isn't worth his salt, he is not worth any one's caring about.”

“ Have you two had a quarrel ? ”

“ No.”

“ Because sisters do try to manage their brothers' affairs, and know nothing about them.”

“ It is not that.”

“ I never interfered between you and Julius.”

“ You misunderstand, Moll. You are

they want to be disagreeable."

"Look here, Moll" (Fanny came round in front then, and faced Moll); "Dalton has been behaving to you like a brute, and it is better I should tell you so."

Moll's lip quivered.

"You say that of your own brother?"

"Yes, because it is true."

"I think you may be wrong," said Moll in a very low voice. "I used to think he meant nothing, but I don't think so now —to-day."

"He had no business to begin a flirtation."

"I am not sure that I did not begin it," said the candid Moll, searching back in the archives of her memory. "I hated

him at first, because he was so proud and so indolent, and then I thought—mother said, and I thought myself—a title was a grand thing. Now, I like him for himself."

"He—it is all wrong, a misunderstanding—he cannot marry you! Dear Moll, forgive me for telling you."

"Julius hinted that once, but I would not believe it. But, Lady Fanny, now that I have learnt to love him, what am I to do? I can't find my old hatred again now."

"Can't you, Moll?"

"You are sure all you say is true?" asked Moll piteously.

"Quite."

"Do all swells behave like this, Lady Fanny? Does a title give every one the right to do this sort of thing?"

true gentlemen enough, recognizing their power only for the better use of it. But Dalton is young, foolish, spoiled."

"I don't think one of father's clerks would do this; would not, at least, set himself to make a girl love him, and then, when he'd succeeded, sheer off."

"Some people don't seem to see the justice of things. Dalton is very thoughtless."

"Don't you think he liked me a little?"

"Yes, I am sure he did, but he did not think."

"He has made a fool of me."

"No, no, Moll. No harm is done."

"I had better go away, ever so far away."

"Indeed, you had better stay here with me. Dalton won't be here; he will be in London, on duty, and—not here."

Molly looked strangely hostile.

"I shall never marry now, Lady Fanny. I will never be made a fool of a second time. I will take my money and do all the good I can with it, and Moll Hawkshaw isn't such a bad name, after all. I'd have changed it for Lord Dalton, because I'd have done anything for him, but I won't change it for any one else."

Then she walked away to the door.

"You won't be an old maid, Moll."

"Yes, I will. They are the people who always do good in the world, the rest only do it between times. Lady Fanny, I should have liked to have seen him just once more, but I trust you, and it being true, it will be better not. You will keep us

Lady Fanny sighed as the door closed on Moll. Why did things go so wrong in this world? Why were Moll and Kate and Dalton all to be miserable, just because Dalton chose to make a fool of himself? We let each other influence us a great deal too much, thought Fanny as she stirred the fire viciously.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day Mr. Hawkshaw arrived at the Priory.

He had, to use his own words to some Tunbridge Wells and City friends, made a point of it. Such a pressing invitation as that which his dear daughter-in-law had given him could not be neglected, and he flew at once on the wings of parental love to see the nest of conjugal happiness which the young birds had made for themselves.

However, he found the young birds in

over to see Mr. Lawley, and during the visit he had asked her if she thought Julius could be prevailed upon to take the hounds. He was himself so failing; such difficulties and quarrels had arisen; Fanny herself was so popular and knew all the farmers so well;—he hoped the owner of the Priory might think of it.

At first Fanny laughed at the bare idea, but as Mr. Lawley went on persuading her and saying how much the country wished it, she began seriously to turn it over in her mind, and she came home wondering what Julius would say to it.

If only he liked it a little more, and if only he went a little better; for, alas! —model husband, model landlord, model

farmer as he was—no one was more alive than Fanny to his shortcomings in the hunting-field. In the old days, when she had desired his company, she always knew where to look for it, and she was always pretty sure that in the detachment in the road, or the last man pounding away to catch them up, was the chosen of her heart, Julius Hawkshaw. Other people, not having sought him so anxiously, were perhaps not aware how slow he really was.

Fanny came home full of this question, and then, finding Mr. Hawkshaw arrived, postponed its consideration till dinner-time. But Mr. Hawkshaw was a most contradictory man to sit down to dinner with; if any one remarked that a dish was bad, he was sure to say it was good, just from a spirit of contradiction.

never helped him on principle.

"You want some fat or something, I dare say, Peter. Take the dish, my dear."

Then, too, he had a most awkward habit of asking how everything was cooked; how much of this was put into a pudding, how much of that into an entrée; not that he had a taste for cooking any more than for wine, but he thought that money and grandeur and good cooks ought to go together, so he liked to seem to know all about it.

Fanny, however, had found out long ago that nerves and taste were things unknown to the family, and she comforted herself with reflecting on the

wisdom of Providence, for what untold agonies these delicate organs might entail on the toilers of the earth !

But Mr. Hawkshaw being so contradictory and paternal, Fanny found the question of the hounds still difficult. After dinner she thought it would be easier.

However, after dinner, Mr. Hawkshaw took up the newspaper ; and nobody ever made such a noise with a newspaper as did Mr. Hawkshaw. Most business men learn to manipulate it easily ; not so Mr. Hawkshaw. He divided it noisily into fragments, then picked up these fragments noisily, then fitted the pages together again numerically and noisily. When he had read the *Times*, he descended noisily to the penny press, and the *Daily News*, with

and prevented his gleaning further information, by saying suddenly—

“Julius, Mr. Lawley wants you to take the hounds ! ”

Julius laughed.

“Not really ? ” said Moll.

“Why, Ju, there’s a chance for you. Let’s hear ; ” and Mr. Hawkshaw put down the newspaper, while he leaned, open-mouthed, towards Fanny.

“You see, he can’t now,” went on Fanny, “and they want somebody. Mr. Bates and Mr. Samson do nothing but quarrel, and nobody cares about them ; and then, Julius, they think that you are the rich man of the county and ought to keep hounds.”

"Nobody cares about me," said Julius.

"But they care about her," said Mr. Hawkshaw, pointing with his thumb to Fanny, "and I think, Ju, too, that now you are married and settled and are a great man in the county, you ought to keep hounds."

"I have had so little experience," said Julius.

"Never you mind! What's that? Everything must be learnt. You take my word for it, Ju, there's nothing makes a chap so popular, or gets him into 'igh society so fast, as taking 'ounds, more especially if he sinks a little money in it."

"The worst of it is, Julius doesn't ride," said Fanny.

"What's that matter? It'll come. Let him buy a three or four hundred guinea

suited me now, I should take to it myself ; it's a fine exercise, that it is, and nothing like it for young people."

"I am not sure that I should not get into no end of bothers. Don't you think so, Fanny ? And then, you see, I can't afford it. I have promised to rebuild Fairdown village, and cottages bring back nothing."

" You see, a young man nowadays need only have money, and he can go and hunt in the shires and give a lead to our highest and best—— ”

"Can he, indeed ? " said Fanny hotly. "I should like to see him. No ; there —in that matter of the lead—blood tells—— ”

"Ah, the blood of the horse, my lady, that's all! I'll be bound if he's on one of those great blood horses such as they ride, and he comes to a fence, he'll find it a deal easier to let the animal have his way and go over it, instead of trying to stop him; at least I should."

Mr. Hawkshaw was clearly for making his son an M.F.H.

Julius was cool about it, and Fanny for some time was neutral; but at length, when the county and Dick, eager for "the moneyed man," put the pressure on, then she, too, joined in the cry, and before many days had passed Julius found himself, plead want of time and of experience as he might, in a fair way of being bound to the county.

Then Fanny's troubles began.

She had seen a horse that Julius must

sudden pet, “don’t begin now to take a leaf out of your father’s book, and to play the part of the self-made man! Do think as other people do—that you have no money at all, and then you will get everything you want, as they do.”

And when Julius went off in a huff, saying the horse was a “regular brute,” and that he would not buy him to ride over any country in the world, then Fanny stood at the hall-window, and soliloquised thus :

“Julius is—duty ; and I am—pleasure. He is so like that tiresome middle-class sometimes, who are always thinking they must pay their bills, and whether they can afford this or that, instead of ‘going

in' for this or that, and seeing about paying up afterwards. Dick and I never did that. If we saw a horse we liked, the only thing was to get him."

But there was a more severe trial than that in store for Fanny.

On the very first hunting morning that Julius was to perform his duty as Master, they started together on two horses just purchased, and both, to use Julius's expression "as fresh as paint." That Julius was uncomfortable on his mount Fanny saw, nor did she wonder; but her own horse occupied her fully, and it being all road and lane work, nothing very dreadful happened, till at last they came to the edge of the common which was the place of meeting.

No sooner had the horses' feet pressed the soft turf than they commenced kick-

Fanny, whose horse was wheeling round and rearing viciously, turned her head away, for she foresaw, trembling, that Julius would never be able to sit the acrobatic performances in which his horse Marmaduke was indulging.

Another second, and there was Marmaduke careering away over the common, heels flying, stirrup leathers swinging; and there, alas! flat on the ground like a tortoise or a turtle, lay Julius.

Consternation for a moment held Fanny speechless.

Then he got up, and looked with a rueful countenance at his splashed clothes.

“Are you hurt, Julius?”

“Hurt, no. But it’s a bore!”

Certainly it was a bore. Especially that it should have happened in full sight of the field, who were just waiting to welcome their new Master. It was well, perhaps, for the hunt, if they wished the rich man to take them, that neither he nor Fanny heard the peal of laughter with which the accident was greeted, or, for the matter of that, some of the remarks that were made.

"That's it," said old Bates; "Pride has his fall."

"There goes our governor," said Gedge, who had never approved of Fanny's marriage. He had always said she went like a bird, and was fit to be a queen.

"This is when one sees what a man is made of," said some one else. "Put him along with gentlemen, and you see the difference."

who had all along been against having Julius as Master; “when a mere adventurer tries to stand on a level with a legitimate gentleman, then one discovers how much lower he is really.”

Dick, who saw little of the Foreign Office this winter, and was always backwards and forwards to hunt, caught Marmaduke, and he, with Sir Hercules and Mr. Bates, went to meet the fallen hero.

“So you were flattened, Julius!” said he, laughing.

“Indeed I was: rather hard, coming at the end of a two-mile figuring along the road all the way.”

“The horses want work,” said Fanny.

"Hope you were not frightened, Lady Fanny."

"I wouldn't have been flattered if I'd been you, Hawkshaw," said young Cook.

But after that they trotted off to cover, and, finding quickly, had a good twenty-five minutes, in which Julius, his pride having been somewhat touched, acquitted himself marvellously well, pounding Gedge himself once, and being in at the death as soon as anybody.

"That brute Marmaduke refused the brook," said he at the end, "but I made him take it."

That day was the first on which he had tasted the sweets of triumph in the hunting field; and when they had killed their afternoon fox also, and he remembered, with a twinge of pleasure, how he had given a lead, over a fence and a drop,

county would like to have him he should like to have it.

So to the end of the season he was kept, as it were, on trial, and many bitter moments of anxiety, and many soft speeches of conciliation, did his conduct cost Fanny.

She knew the temper and the feelings of different members of the field to a turn, from having assisted at so many consultations with Mr. Lawley, and she was more anxious than she could say that Julius should be popular, knowing that, in that matter of hunting a county, popularity is half the battle.

But there was much to fight against. The Kirkcudbrights were not popular

themselves, and little gnats, who could not make their stings felt through the barriers of Kirkcudbright Park, were not sorry to take advantage of this opportunity of revenge, as they thought it, for former marks of neglect. Then other gnats dearly love to have some great man to keep the hounds for them—a man with a title as long as their arm, whom they elbow, and argue against, and button-hole, and give a lead to in the hunting field, and differ with, “to show he’s nobody,” at the hunt meeting; to these it was a terrible come-down to have a Mr. Hawkshaw.

There would be no sport at all in making difficulties now. Since Lord Kirkcudbright had given them up, and the Duke was no sportsman, they had—regretting, as every one must, “poor dear old

purse"—set their hopes on getting some "swell" from some other county, whose occupation was gone, and who would be delighted to come and live amongst them just for the sake of taking the Featherbedfordshire hounds. It was odd that no "swell" jumped at the opening; it was humiliating to have to sue to a Hawkshaw.

"Don't say my hounds, my field, Julius, as I heard you say this morning," said Fanny one day; "they don't like it. You said it to old Lovibond."

"Well, I forgot. But when I put down, or am to put down, so many hundreds a year, and he doesn't——"

"He gives five pounds, I know, and a pound to him may be as much as a

hundred to you, for all I know, especially if the turnips or potatoes turn out badly."

"I meant it more as a joke than anything else."

"Yes, but they don't take it so. And do shake hands; you ought to shake hands with everybody."

"The earth-stoppers?"

"Well, no, not the earth-stoppers, I think; but you are not half civil enough to anybody."

"I have no time. If I am to talk to keepers and huntsman, and find foxes and ride after them, I can't think of anything else. All the rest should be understood."

"I wonder why civility is never understood."

But Julius worked with a will; Fanny said he would have "hounds on the brain" soon. Early in the morning she would

away!" and then a loud ringing "Tally-ho" would make the old Priory walls resound, and Fanny would fly to the window, thinking the hounds were there by chance and in for a good thing, and Go-lightly was not saddled.

"E'leu in! E'leu in!" Julius would answer. "Does that sound right? Is that how they say it?"

"I can't have my hopes raised in this sort of way, Julius," she would say, laughing; "go and have a good practice with Gedge, I would advise; you don't do it anything like half as well as he does, nor is your voice half so musical."

"I never knew till now," was a remark of Julius once, "what a great deal a

sportsman had to learn. I now begin to understand why when a man has a red coat on he orders everybody about, and thinks the whole place is his, and shouts and swaggers before everyone ; he would even ask her Majesty herself if she had seen the fox, without further ceremony, if she were to pass that way and he were at fault."

"How you will order them about, Ju," said Mr. Hawkshaw ; "my Lord this and my Lady that ! They'll have to do as you tell 'em, my lad. What a fine fellow you'll be !"





CHAPTER IX.

THAT winter of 1875 seemed loth to depart, and March, playing his part of coming in like a lion, indeed, added day by day wind and storm, hail and snow, to the history of his days. There had been a heavy fall on the Friday night, frost and wind all Saturday, a sort of sham appearance of thaw on Sunday, but by Monday everything was dripping. Snowdrifts in places, of course, but what does that matter? Snow stops nobody. The air was milder and more genial than it had been for days, the wind had gone

down, and Mr. Samson arrayed himself in his scarlet with a joyous heart, and sent a “Forrard-away” after Mr. Bates and Sir Arthur Douglas, who happened to be passing his gate on their hunters, as he was getting on his.

“Sure to hunt to-day,” said he as he joined them.

“Oh yes, may be a little late, and if so, it won’t hurt.”

Green patches in the lowlands, streaks of sun on the hill sides, but patter, patter, went the drops from the trees overhead, and splash, squish, went the horses’ feet into the moist ground, and brightly gleamed the sunshine on the hedges and on the trunks of the oaks, and bob, bob, went Sir Hercules Stanley’s red coat along the lane about fifty yards in front of them.

“Snow disappearing rapidly all the morning,” said Mr. Bates, as his old mare put her foot into two feet of snow, and squish, squash, was the result.

The very drops twinkling and bobbing in the hedgerow seemed to be laughing at them, and to have a private understanding with the sunshine.

“How far is it, now, to Hackney cross roads?” asked Mr. Clavering, coming up.

“Glad to see you. Good morning. Four miles, I think.”

And still they gathered.

But at Hackney cross roads there were not many farmers, not many of the Cook or Brown stamp, either. Old Lovibond had come out on his cob, but

only to see what they did. Meanwhile, they waited for the hounds. Twelve o'clock, and they came not.

Sir Arthur thought of letters left unwritten, and began to wonder if he had not been a fool to come; Sir Hercules indulged in a few sarcasms and abuse of Julius. Gedge, too, was not spared.

"I don't know now that we have not made a mistake. Mr. Hawkshaw must be singularly unsporting not to come out such a day as this;" and Sir Arthur looked round on the other depressed sportsmen as though to challenge contradiction.

"You don't mean to say he isn't coming?" said Sir Hercules.

"What! are you thinking we are putting the wrong man in the wrong place, Sir Arthur?" asked Mr. Bates.

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One o'clock struck from the old church
in the hollow.

"Can't be coming."

"But he's a good fellow," said some
one else. "He'll soon take to it; only
wants a little initiating."

"If it's in him. But is it in him?"

"She'll put it into him."

"Oh no, I don't believe in that."

"She'll find lots of ways to spend the
money more agreeably than on us."

"But she's thorough sporting."

"Ah yes, now; but it never lasts with
ladies."

They fell back on their sandwiches and
on the contents of their flasks; they

interspersed their rising anger with gossip about poor Bob Lawley's hopeless state and Lord Kirkcudbright's increasing weakness, and wondered which would be taken first. They regretted the beautiful day they were losing ; they seriously considered whether Julius should not be posted up in the etiquette of fox-hunting ; and after two o'clock, when the Hawkshaw *ménage* past, present, and to come, had been turned inside out, a farmer, who had passed the kennels on his way to market, told them Gedge had had no orders, and was not dreaming of coming out.

This sent them to the right-about in the most fiery state of mind of which a disappointed sportsman can be capable, and, as a sort of vent for his repressed fury, Sir Hercules set his horse at the

the ditch floundered into it, and found Sir Hercules a soft, though moist, white bed, into which he sank with a grace peculiar to Featherbedfordshire, for the thaw gave the snow no powers of resistance.

“Was it deep, man?” shouted some one.

Sir Hercules’ head was just visible out of the drift.

“These beastly hedges! They collect the snow so vilely!”

Man and beast struggling for footing was no enviable sight. Some of the sportsmen thought Julius might have saved them a wetting after all. Some parts of the country were not nice, but

they gave no expression to this after-thought of theirs; that was locked in their breasts, and only risked detection when Sir Hercules seemed most miserable; and all the way home wounded feelings were expressed against Julius, as though each man had sustained a personal insult.

Meanwhile, could the field have seen this recalcitrant Master they would have been surprised.

They must have travelled express to London, and there in a dim, barn-like, fusty, desolate old church in the City they would have found a small group of persons.

A clergyman in white robe ministering on the altar steps; two persons—Lord Dalton and Kate.

And there beside him was a tall aristocratic old gentleman, Lord Tarleton;

Sir Hercules in front of him.

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"What! are you thinking we are putting the wrong man in the wrong place, Sir Arthur?" asked Mr. Bates.

tear trembling on her eyelash; Lord Tarleton was quite sure he was doing right; Fanny and Julius smiled at each other with a sense of relief; even the voice of the clergyman softened; only the Dissenting preacher and the clerk remained cold and unmoved.

The service over, they all moved off to the vestry, and then Kate turned, and, her eye meeting Fanny's, she came across to her and put her hands in hers.

For answer Fanny kissed her.

"I am so glad."

Afterwards, when all had shaken hands with Kate, and had whispered some wish for joy, and the two were standing slightly apart, Kate said dreamily, still holding Fanny's hand—

"It is odd that when life is all up-hill and times are hardest, we may not have friends. Afterwards, when the sunshine has come back, then they may come back too. I should like them best at the other time."

That evening as Fanny and Julius went steaming back to Featherbedfordshire, the state of the country filled them both with alarm.

"I tell you what, Julius, they must have wanted to hunt."

"I never thought of this. Just look, only white streaks here and there."

"Ah, there's a drift."

"Whatever shall we say? No marriage, no birth, nothing short of death, is sufficient to stop hunting when hounds can go."

"I am not sure that it won't be a good

"I think going up to Kirkcudbright to announce it there will be the worst day's work we have before us."

Fanny was just having tea after her journey from London, when who should walk in but her mother and her sister Katie.

Lady Kirkcudbright's visits were rare, for her presence was constantly needed by her husband, who required some one always to be with him now.

"Where is Julius?" asked she as she sat down. "We passed some hunting men on our way, and they are in a fine state of indignation with him for not hunting to-day."

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“Can’t be wrong, with such a long purse to back him up; they say he don’t care what he spends on anything he likes.”

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And there beside him was a tall aristocratic old gentleman, Lord Tarleton;

and, behind him, smiling at him once or twice, with a look of confidence and assurance on her face, strangely at variance with the place and the countenances of some there, stood Lady Fanny Hawkshaw. Beside her was Julius.

By Kate stood an old man, erect and stern-looking. Now he was looking down at his daughter, now he cast his eyes up to heaven as though protesting his innocence against the vileness and baseness of the dwellers on earth. His loose, seedy-looking clothes, his untidy, unshorn appearance, his sparse grey locks, his thin sallow face, with its repulsive expression of uncompromising sternness, made it difficult to believe him the father of that beautiful clinging girl, just now receiving the marriage rite. And there was the clerk. In sonorous voice he repeated the

responses, hinted to the bridal couple what they should do, worked as it were with the clergyman, that the due form should be observed, and treated them, Dissenting preacher and all, as so many children who could know nothing about it.

The sun glinted in on Kate's brow—that same sun that was warming the hearts and kindling fury in the souls of Mr. Samson and Sir Hercules. In the absence of others, in the absence of spoken words of kindness and of congratulation and of blessing, Heaven did not forget to send a smile, which lighted up that dim fusty old church with sudden glory, and stole to the hearts of the little group with sudden warmth. Dalton felt a peace at his heart he had not known for months, and the solemn words of the priest fell

on him with solemn unction ; Kate felt a burst of thankfulness which brought a tear trembling on her eyelash ; Lord Tarleton was quite sure he was doing right ; Fanny and Julius smiled at each other with a sense of relief ; even the voice of the clergyman softened ; only the Dissenting preacher and the clerk remained cold and unmoved.

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"He has been in London with me," said Fanny. "And I have some news to tell you, mamma."

"So have I some to tell you, Fan," said her mother; "I wonder what you will say to it."

Lady Kirkcudbright looked as if she thought any Hawkshaw news must be thoroughly uninteresting, but as if the whole world must be influenced by anything happening at Kirkcudbright.

"What is it?" asked Fanny, looking from her mother to Katie, who was crimson with blushes.

"Katie is engaged to be married."

"Katie engaged! What nonsense is this?" exclaimed Fanny angrily. There is no one for her to be engaged to here."

"Guess."

"You have had no one staying at Kirkcudbright for an age; unless it be Dick Lorrequer, or Harry Vane, but neither of

“Think again.”

“There is no one in Featherbedfordshire.”

“What do you say to Lord Swansea?”

“What?” exclaimed Fanny, starting up.

“My dear mother, you must be mad.”

“Mamma is not mad at all,” said Katie, with an assumption of dignity and a flash of anger.

“You are all old Swansea mad; you always have been.”

“I am sure I don’t know why he marries Katie,” said Lady Kirkcudbright. “She has everything to gain.”

“Perhaps he does it to spite me,” said Fanny.

“I could not get a season again for ever so long, you know Fanny, now papa

is so ill. And they talked of letting the house in London."

"And so we shall now, certainly," said Lady Kirkeudbright.

"There, you see. And this way I shall have no end of seasons, and can give balls and do no end of good; and really, though it does seem rather a shame to leave mamma in this dull place, I think I'm very lucky."

"Lucky?"

"I was only getting older and uglier every month, and if I'd waited perhaps I mightn't have come across another rich old fellow who wanted a young wife."

"Do you think you'll like it?"

"I don't know, I suppose so. It is horribly dull at Kirkeudbright, and I need not be dull at least, by-and-by."

"You are not very congratulatory or

family and such an unexceptionable connection——”

“Fanny doesn’t care about that!”

“Oh yes! I do. But ‘handsome is that handsome does,’ you know!”

“Ah!—you are thinking about that money. Well, you know, half of that was paid when he asked for it——”

“Yes, and Julius paid the rest of it.”

Lady Kirkcudbright crimsoned.

“Not really? I never knew.”

“I did not know till afterwards. It was when we were all so sad about papa being ill, Julius said we must not have any more trouble.”

“I wonder if Swansea knew,” said Lady Kirkcudbright thoughtfully.

“Fanny, did you really refuse Swan-

sea?" asked Katie. Did he really propose? I often wonder. I don't think you could have, really."

"I wonder!" said Fanny laughing.

"Think of that house in Park Lane, and of that place in Kent, so conveniently near town."

"My dear Katie, I am lost in wonder at you. May you have your reward! He has quickly transferred his attentions from me to you. I hope you will keep him constant, and be happy in your gilded slavery."

"You are bitter, and I can quite understand it, Fanny. But it is inevitable now."

Her mother's tone was sad, and there was a touch of reproach in it. Fanny turned quickly to see her face. Had the troubles of life and the realities of it

deter her from sacrificing one of her daughters ?

Then Dalton's marriage flashed across her.

"Mamma, I must speak to you."

"It is inevitable," repeated Lady Kirkcudbright, still harping on Katie.

"About something else."

Her mother rose at once, and Fanny led the way across the hall and the drawing-rooms to her own little boudoir. Was there intention in leading her through all this luxury to show that she at least had gotten much and given nothing but love in exchange ?

"What is it, Fanny?" asked her mother, as she seated herself opposite the brightly burning fire.

"It is something I ought to tell you, but I don't like doing it at all. After all, why should I? Dalton will write to you, it is only that I promised——"

"Dalton!" exclaimed Lady Kirkcudbright.

What a change came over her face! Fanny would have given anything to have been able to put some leagues between them then. But the moment after there came an expression of helpless fear into her eyes, and Fanny felt glad to be beside her.

"It will be a sad blow to you, mother."

"What is it? Is he ill?"

"No; I was with him in London this morning."

"Tell me—not—anything—bad."

"Do be brave, mother. There has

“Thank Heaven for that.”

Then Fanny saw she was misunderstood.

“He has married her.”

A groan more than a scream escaped from Lady Kirkcudbright.

“Not—that! I knew there was something all along.”

“You will like her, mother.”

“Like her!—now we are ruined. Swansea won’t marry Katie now!”

“She is so beautiful. . . . She is a Dissenting preacher’s daughter—no worse than that.”

“No worse than that! Have you upheld him? Have you had anything to do with it?”

“I advised him to marry her when I knew her and the child.”

“ Not content with disgracing us all by your own marriage, you—you—have— ”

“ Hush, mother ! Some reparation, at least, was needed. You could not have borne that that stigma should have clung to our name, eh ? Think for a moment.”

“ No one would have known anything about it.”

“ But it was killing her.”

“ I dare say. Why did you not let her die ? She’ll live now for ever, of course.”

“ Mother, don’t be so hard and cruel. You could not have borne it, I am sure. And now Dalton is in a paradise—they both are—and will be if you forgive them.”

“ A fool’s paradise ! Think, Katie,” she went on, as she came in at that moment, “ what your clever sister has been doing.

Katie stood open-mouthed with wonder.

"A very holy young woman, with most saintly parents, I suppose."

"I don't know anything about that, but I can't see a crying wrong going on under my eyes without trying to right it," said Fanny fiercely.

"And she came crying to you, I dare say?"

"No, she didn't."

Then Julius came running in.

"Fanny, suppose we hunt to-morrow, as we didn't to-day."

"Much better," said she.

"I'll send telegrams all round, shall I? Oh, how d'ye do, Lady Kirkeudbright."

"Katie's engaged to Lord Swansea, Julius."

"Ah, is she? Or shall I send a message to the kennels, and send round so? That will be best. I'll go and do it at once."

"These hunting-men are odious," said Lady Kirkcudbright.

"Fancy Julius to be called 'a hunting-man,' and an odious hunting-man, too. That is promotion indeed!"

Fanny laughed merrily.

When her mother had been gone about two hours, Dick came over asking for dinner.

"Lucky for you we're dining at half-past eight to-night, Master Dick."

"I only came down yesterday, and there's that old fool, Swansea, there, and now to-night there's a row about Dalton—what is it, Fan?—and our mother is in such a state! I came to you on the

that girl, has he ? ”

“ Yes, he has.”

“ Whew ! I used to think he would, and then I thought he’d never face it.”

“ It was the right thing to do, Dick.”

“ Yes ; no end of a bore, though. If it had been me, now, it wouldn’t have mattered. Down, Pry, down.”

“ Oh, you’ve brought that dog of yours, have you ? ”

“ Yes ; I thought Fanny would like to see her old friend again.”

“ I don’t care so much about him now. I like my Skye ever so much more.”

“ After all, dogs are very much like children,” said Julius ; “ we worship our own, but hate our neighbours’. I don’t mean that I hate Pry.”

" You say that it wouldn't have mattered, Dick, if it had been you instead of Dalton, but I don't know. I think the greater person we are, the more incumbent it is upon us to do what's right."

" Humph ! Most people look at it the other way."

" How is Lord Swansea ? "

" As dull as usual, and more full of his boots than ever. I hate a dull person who can't see the point of your jokes and stories. It shakes one's faith in one's self, and one begins to doubt their efficacy."

" I wish she were not going to marry him," said Julius.

" Why ? " asked Dick.

" It seems such a very mercenary marriage ; there is nothing to please a young woman's fancy in him, and he is

not clever, nor great, nor good, nor anything."

"She'll make a great splash, and be thought ever so much of for a season or two," said Dick.

"Yes, after all, she is more silly than mean, Julius," said Fanny; "you go too deep for her reasons. She wants amusement, and is tired of keeping up appearances on nothing at all. She thinks Lord Swansea will give her what she wants, and save all trouble."

"Oh, yes. I know lots of people dress smart just for the love of dress, not at all for what it cost; and I dare say Katie does want to enjoy herself and have her fun while she may. And the position dazzles her, I dare say."

"They'll give no end of parties, and I shall dine there when I like, and Harry Vane will lead all her cotillons."

“Poor Harry Vane!”

“Will that keep Katie happy, I wonder?” said Julius. “I used to feel quite ill at all those balls and parties I went to; one sees through it all so soon—that sickening glamour and appearance of everything; the show and false smiles of society quite took all enjoyment of it away from me.”

“You are a man of property, my dear Ju,” said Dick; “I am only a poor clerk in the Foreign Office, and must take what I can get. By the by, where is Mr. Hawkshaw and Moll?”

“They left us on Saturday when we went up to town,” said Fanny.

Fanny left them playing billiards, and was too glad to go off early to rest, after the varied emotions of the day.

CHAPTER X.

GOLDEN opinions did Julius win for his happy thought of hunting on Tuesday ; and golden opinions, too, did he win by his riding throughout the day ; for Dick mounted him on a certain bay mare that knew every inch of the country, and knew every fence as well as her own stable : thanks to her, Julius was called “a mighty Nimrod ” that day.

They were riding home together, Julius and Fanny—Sir Hercules had just left them—when the groom from Kirkcudbright met them.

"I have been to the Priory, my lady.
I was sent over for you."

"What is it, William?" asked Fanny indolently, and rather annoyed. One likes to go straight home after hunting, and not to be bothered.

"My lord . . . he is very ill. Her ladyship wants you at once."

Fanny and Julius turned their horses in the direction of Kirkcudbright without a word.

"Is it another stroke, William, tell me?"

"I am afraid so, my lady."

"When was it?"

"This morning, my lady, about eleven o'clock."

And all that day, while she had been enjoying herself, this heavy trouble had hung over the old home! She urged on

affection for her father came back with full force as she reproached herself with having allowed other feelings and other interests to keep her away from him for the last few days.

At the door Dick met them. He had gone home earlier in the day in all ignorance. As she crossed the old hall, that dreadful feeling of restraint imposed by the terrible presence of Death, took possession of her, and she felt as if she could not breathe freely. The old place seemed to take some new unfamiliar aspect with this dread resting on the house. At the bottom of the stairs she met Lord Swansea.

"You here?" said she, without any offer of her hand, or any farther greeting.

He seemed to her so strangely out of place when there was anything sad, or solemn, or real near. She passed on to her father's room.

There everything was hushed, dark, still.

Lady Kirkcudbright and Katie and Alice were there; Alice sitting crying on the sofa, Katie and her mother on either side of the bed. The fiat had gone forth; evidently there was no hope; Fanny read it in their faces. She and her mother had not parted overnight the best of friends; now this was forgotten.

“Mother, is it”

“The doctor has given him up.”

Fanny went up to him and put her arm gently round him, kissing his face with a tenderness perhaps she had

Then Dick, who had followed Fanny upstairs with Julius, came in.

"Have you sent for Dalton?" asked Fanny.

"Yes."

"And to Bolton?"

"Yes."

Once more she took her father's hand, and, in answer to her pressure, he opened his eyes. There was the light of recognition in them, a light breaking like a gleam of sunlight over the weary distorted face, and then all was still. Such stillness as none could break!

When did life ebb away? When did the soul take flight? When did the eyes close on earthly sight and open to a glory past our understanding? Whither did

the smile, the last they saw break over his face—begun here, whither did it take him? What did that awful silence, that fell on them all almost unconsciously, mean?

Just that it was over, and that now another would reign in his stead.

And just then he came.

Dalton, arriving suddenly after his journey, came in upon this stillness, and felt words and power alike fail him as he stood upon the threshold of the door looking at their awe-struck faces and the dead lying there.

Yet it was a relief to them. It roused them from their pain. There was another to whom the shock would be so sudden, so fearful, they must forget their suffering to comfort him.

Dick and Julius went up to him.

from him, as though combating their assertion, as though he would not, could not, have it true.

But Fanny walked up to him.

“Just come, Dalton.”

And, taking his hand, she led him as though they were children again, up to the bedside, and together they looked on the face, whence now, alas ! the smile had died, and the hues of death were gathering all too fast.

And then—forgetting all, forgetting mother and sisters, forgetting the two young men looking on—Dalton, the son, knelt and sobbed. A return of a prodigal son indeed ! Was this all the welcome he could get ? It may be, remorse for the past had much to do with his grief ; such

bitterness is increased tenfold at scenes like this. Half was grief for the father he lost, but half was sorrow for the grief he had caused him. Oh, now for the debts, and the days ill spent! Oh, now for the idle tales, and the pangs he had thoughtlessly cost! His father had known—his father had known—and had died without forgiveness. Oh, if he could live just these ten years over again . . . just a clean page to write their history over again . . . ! But death is inexorable—it could not be.

“ Didn’t he ask for me? Was there no sign—nothing? ”

“ Nothing,” said the mother, who comprehended something of her son’s feelings, and knew how his soul was thirsting for that unfinished reconciliation.

When funeral and all was over, there came other trials.

Lord Dalton had been most considerate towards his mother, wished her to live on at Kirkcudbright for the present, to have the house in London, to do exactly as she preferred. He was inexpressibly pained to find she would receive no kindness from him at all. She moved about the house in her heavy mourning, which seemed to add to her stature and to the ghastly pallor of her countenance, and her very presence seemed a reproach to him.

“Will she never forgive me for marrying Kate?” asked he of Fanny at last, tried beyond endurance.

"The time must surely come, Dalton.
But you must wait."

"I think he—my father—would have said I was right, if he had known all."

"Yes; if he had known all, or if he could have seen it so."

Lady Kirkcudbright refused to hold any communication with Dalton on the subject. It was too painful, she said. She only explained to the lawyers that she would take her jointure and go with her girls as soon as possible, so as to leave the coast clear for Lady Kirkcudbright. She should probably go to Bolton for a little while, till her plans were made up.

One day Dalton, coming down from London unexpectedly, was surprised to find packing-cases and trunks in the hall.

"Who is going away or coming, Katie?" asked he of his sister.

"Are you afraid of Kate?" asked he, with sudden earnestness.

"No, Dalton—no!"

But he passed on unheeding her answer to his mother's room.

She was standing before her dressing-case, evidently arranging some jewels.

"What is this, mother?" asked he huskily. "Are you going away?"

"Yes, Dalton, I am."

"Do I drive you away?"

"No, no—not you!"

She sat down and covered her face for a moment with her hand.

"Is it Kate?"

Lady Kirkcudbright could not answer.

"Won't you see her, mother?"

There was a long pause.

"Won't you see her, mother?"

"I cannot meet her."

"Never, mother—never? Well, I don't deserve it. I thought you might have done it for my sake. But yet, why should you?"

He took two or three turns across the room, while she sat there, immovable, almost afraid, wondering what would come next.

"Where will you go, mother?"

"To Bolton."

"After all," said he, suddenly facing her, and almost astonished at his own courage, "if you had to choose between a real right and a fancied right that society makes and falsely upholds, which would you take? The one is so easy, or is, at least, the easiest, because every one helps you; but the other, the real

Lady Kirkcudbright did not speak at first.

“ You will find it cost you very dear,” said she, in coldly measured tones, at length.

“ Of course, I shall have to suffer ; but, by heavens ! Kate shall not suffer any more, if I can help it. Mother, you might make her life easy for her now, at least.”

Lady Kirkcudbright put her hands to her ears.

“ If I have gone against you in this, it was that at the end I was sure you would see it was only justice.”

“ Justice ! ”

“ But Fanny will be her friend, at least. Fanny is truth, at least, and

gave me strength, and showed it me rightly when I might have failed."

"Enough, Dalton. All my children rise against me—all. When I am dead, and you are all miserable through your own follies, then you may be sorry."

It was no use prolonging this bitter discussion. In the midst of it, Kate's smiling peaceful face seemed to beam upon him, and he sighed for the time when his mother should be softened towards them both.



CHAPTER XI.

DALTON and Kate were established at Kirkcudbright now; Dalton had sent in his papers and left the regiment; the house in London was let, and there was no reason why, with the extreme care which they were going to practise, the family exchequer should not be replenished.

To explain how the county had talked about these events would fill three volumes at least; suffice it to say, that as yet no one had been sufficiently Christian to call on Lady Kirkcudbright.

Little cared Kate whether she were called on or not, save for Dalton's sake; who sometimes looked anxious, and wondered whether any woman in the world would ever be kind to Kate, except Fanny. Just then, he took a hatred to all women in society, said they were all soured, backbiting, uncharitable.

Fanny, playing one day in the hall at Kirkcudbright with beautiful curly-headed Harold, heard some of these remarks.

"It is too soon for any one to come yet, Kate," said she to her afterwards. "Dalton's mourning—our loss—is so recent."

Kate smiled. She always answered Dalton so when he murmured.

Save for this doubt of Dalton's, and save for their recent loss, no four people were happier than Julius and Fanny, and

out of the question now, yet the quiet busy lives which they led, full of thoughts for others, filled their hearts with peace, and made the hours run by on golden wheels.

Fanny, however, did not forget Dalton's anxiety about Kate's isolation, and one day she drove over to Mr. Lawley. At first she was appalled at the change in him—so pale, so wasted, so shrunken; he was but the ghost of her cheery old friend of the hunting-field, who was always the first at a fence and the last to go home.

He tried to reassure her.

"All in the day's work, Lady Fanny—all in the day's work. I'm doing as I'm told, and getting on."

"Getting on?" said she.

"Well, I'm afraid it's only getting on to the end now. But we must all come to it; and how soon it comes now, I care not."

Fanny was shocked.

How could she talk of such a thing as people calling or not calling on Kate in the face of death—so legibly written here!

But he questioned her—asked this, asked that, of Kirkcudbright, and at last gave her an opening by twitting her on her friendship with the new great lady.

So then Fanny told her tale—told how she had loved her all through the autumn months, how she had pitied her, and how she had vowed, when she had discovered all, that reparation should be done.

Old Lawley's eyes moistened when he heard the tale.

“May I bring her?—may I really? She is outside in the pony-carriage, walking it up and down.”

As Lady Fanny ran off to fetch her, Bob Lawley remembered, with a twinkle of satisfaction, that to-day was Wednesday, and that on Wednesdays the Duchess always came over, if possible, to read to him.

“Kate has been longing to see my best friend,” said Fanny, as she brought her in. “She did not think she was to be honoured to-day.”

As for Bob Lawley, he thought he had never seen any one half so beautiful in all his life—he could not take his eyes off her. He felt ashamed of himself, and of his crippled state, and of his age,

and of his room, and of everything, he said.

“ Dear me ! ” added he half to himself, “ what good the sight of youth and beauty does even to an old fellow like me ! ”

Outside there was a sound of wheels.

Why—so soon ? It was too soon. Mr. Lawley had not had half time to make Kate’s acquaintance ; but the Duchess came bustling in, and, as she saw who was there, half a frown—there never could be more—settled on her dear benevolent countenance.

There she stood for a second without speaking, and Kate got up from her chair and stood nervously before her ; then the Duchess looked out from the mist of her perplexity towards Fanny, but Fanny sat still in her chair and laughed. There was nothing else for it.

looking straight at her. Kate looked up at her; there was a smile twitching about her mouth, she longed to say something, but she did not dare. But her eyes spoke for her. Out went the Duchess's hand.

"You are Dalton's wife. Shall we two be friends?"

"You darling Duchess!" said Fanny, jumping up and kissing her.

"My dear," said the Duchess to Kate, suddenly assuming the manner of an old woman; "you shouldn't have such eyes as that. Tell her so, Fanny!"

Then they all began to talk, and for awhile, hunting being a subject of vital interest, and one that could hurt and wound nobody, it formed the staple of

Fanny's and Mr. Lawley's conversation. But ever and anon the Duchess's eyes found their way to Kate's face, and she lost the sense of their words in wondering how she came to be so fair.

"I shall leave money to the hounds, you know, Lady Fanny," said Bob Lawley. "I don't see why I shouldn't; so whoever takes them will never be a loser."

"Oh, but would that be right, Mr. Lawley? Oughtn't you to leave it to some hospital, or fishmongers' company, or almshouse, or something?"

"I told you once I believed I had done more good by keeping hounds than by anything else, and I think so still."

"Yes, but——"

"People leave loaves of bread and money for cloaks, or for useless buildings

and spirits and better days than anything else in the world."

"But that sort of people shouldn't have things left them," said the Duchess severely.

"Why not, madam? What does a younger son so much good as a day in the grass—and how is he to keep hounds? Or the clerks and the other wretched fellows whom every one forgets? Oh no, I shall leave my money to a pack of hounds."

"I think you are quite right, Mr. Lawley. It makes one happy just to see them and hear them," said Kate. "Think, then, how many people you will benefit by the legacy."

"Yes; we all leave our troubles on

the other side of the fence," said he gaily, "and never think of picking them up again till next morning, and that's a holiday, at least."

Soon after Fanny and Kate left.

"Will you come and see me at Bolton?" asked the Duchess, of Kate, as they parted.

"Yes—may I?"

"May I come to Kirkcudbright?"

"You are very kind to me," said Kate gratefully.

"Indeed, I ought to have been to Kirkcudbright before," said her Grace to herself as she drove home; "most unchristian and most remiss of me; it was all Caroline! Indeed, now that it is inevitable, we should all try to help her to make her life good and Dalton happy."

That was when she got home and passed through the room to take her bonnet off. She said it with malicious intent and left it to take root.

The result of the Duchess being seen, a few days after, driving her grey ponies through Sloborough and Fairdown to Kirkcudbright, was that the next day Lady Anne Clavering came to call, and, the day after, Lady Douglas and Lady Stanley, who passed each other in the park, and after that cards were left by Mr. Camelford, the Parkers, Seftons, Bateses, Samsons, and whoever claimed intimacy sufficient with Dalton to authorise acquaintanceship with his wife. On the whole, the Duchess having led the way, the neighbourhood began to hope

that in time great things might accrue to them by the advent of the new Lady Kirkcudbright. She was of low origin, she would be grateful for notice; she would take pleasure in entertaining, in being made up to; she would not sail in those unattainable ethereal heights in which the Dowager Lady Kirkcudbright had delighted; she would welcome them warmly, and would be too glad to make them thoroughly at home in the grand old house. It would be pleasant to breathe the atmosphere of grandeur so easily.

But they were mistaken.

Kate looked over the cards, and a shadow fell on her face as they lay there before her.

“They only come because the Duchess came, Dalton. I don’t care one bit about them.”

"Not now; surely not now. I need not go tearing over the country because they come prying here. Surely it is too soon."

Kate dreaded all the duties of her position ; she wanted to postpone the evil as long as possible. Her hand was resting on Harold's curly head as she spoke.

"As you like, Kate, you know," said her husband.

"They know nothing about me. Let me deserve their kindness first, and let me get to know them by degrees, and take to them as I like them. I don't care a bit how people stand, you know ; it is only what they are that interests me. A card and a pair of horses do not tell one that."

So that, after all, the doors of Kirkcudbright did not fly open, and its inmates, with those of Bolton and the Priory, formed a little charmed circle of their own, which proved all-sufficient for their needs.

Lady Kirkcudbright had been away in London, where she had been busily occupied in establishing herself with her daughters. Dick, too, was to have his head-quarters there. However, she had now returned suddenly to Bolton for a few days previous to entering finally her new residence. Of all this Kate knew nothing.

One day in April (the hunting was over now; even the last by-day had had its run, and Julius was the only one of the family who had been out) Fanny drove over to Kirkcudbright unexpectedly, and wanted Kate to come to Bolton.

They went.

Fanny and the Duchess had conspired together to take Lady Kirkcudbright by storm.

In the arcade, surrounded by flowers, and a background of yellow azalea, with a great white camellia flowering in a mass, like a pillar of snow, or a cascade of blossom, sat Kate. The Duchess was talking to her as she worked away at her cross-stitch.

Lady Kirkcudbright was sitting in the library when Alice ran in to her mother breathless.

“ Oh, mamma ! such a lovely lady ! sitting in the arcade, with the Duchess—all in black. And such eyes ! ”

“Who is it?” asked her mother, putting her book down.

“I don’t know. Some friend I have never seen.”

Lady Kirkcudbright took her book up again, but presently she put it down. A new face would be a refreshment; she should rather like to see her. Alice had run off again.

“I hope Louie has not asked any one to stay here to meet me; I asked her not.”

Then she got up and walked to the window. The trees were putting on their new clothing, the bright verdure was inspiring. Lady Kirkcudbright strolled the length of the room, her half-closed book in her hand; so into the hall, along the corridor of flowers, and at the end she saw the Duchess working, and saw Alice

Some one was speaking in a low soft voice, in answer to the Duchess.

Lady Kirkcudbright listened, and liked the voice, it was so gentle.

"Oh, yes ! You know I have loved Lady Fanny so long. She was my good angel ; she is my good angel still."

Who was this who called Fanny her good angel ?

Lady Kirkcudbright's heavy skirts trailed along the ground.

As the Duchess looked up and saw her coming, a light flush suffused her cheek. She looked at her curiously, waiting to see what would happen.

Then Lady Kirkcudbright reached the open space, and saw Kate sitting in the recess with the background of that white

camellia blossom. She was for the moment staggered, astounded. Who was this who had suddenly come to Bolton? What a beautiful woman!

"Is that my Fanny?" asked she, finding some words at last, and speaking with bent head and soft conciliating smile. "Is it my Fanny of whom you were speaking? Has she indeed been some one's good angel?"

As for Kate, she had first looked at Lady Kirkeudbright with her particularly quiet smile. She had not expected her; she had thought it was Fanny when she first saw the black gown; now instinctively she felt who it was, and her expression changed from one of gentle peace to alarm.

She rose from her low seat, and her little slight figure seemed to spring up

behind.

"Yes, Caroline," said the Duchess, rising too, and taking Lady Kirkcudbright's hand as though to enforce obedience. "This is Kate, Dalton's wife." The hand relaxed, and the pale face flushed angrily. "Fanny has been her good angel: you will be another, will you not—her fast friend, at least?"

"Lady Kirkcudbright, you will never call me daughter, I fear; but do not let me come between you and your son. It is breaking his heart. Do see him! I will go away, you know. You need not see me."

Where did Fanny spring from? She was there, offering Kate a rose from the hot-house; and there was the Duke

making a speech about its thorns, and saying that Fanny had been making an April fool of him. Clearly it was no time for tragedy.

But the sort of smile that had broken over Kate's face at Fanny's advent was wreathing itself into a very sorry affair indeed, for Lady Kirkcudbright had made no movement, and stood cold and impassible.

Then Fanny took the initiative, and led Kate up to her.

“Mother, dear, let by-gones be by-gones, won't you?”

“You must be friends, Caroline,” said the Duke.

“Kate is my niece, and cousin, and daughter, and everything,” said the Duchess, stretching relationship in the cause of charity.

So the widow, stormed at all points at once, bent her head and gave in. She was vanquished, pride laid low, and she achieved, she said afterwards, a great victory over herself.

“Be my daughter, too,” said she in a stifled voice ; and the two women kissed.

“Lord Tarleton said you must love her, mother,” said Fanny mischievously.

“Lord Tarleton is a meddling, tiresome, true old prophet,” said Lady Kirkcudbright. “But you know when one has a great deal of sorrow one must love somebody.”





CHAPTER XII.

ONE of the first things that Fanny did when she had seen the reconciliation firmly established between her mother and Kate was to go over to "the Brushes" to tell the good news to Mr. Lawley. On the way she remembered gladly that it was Wednesday again, and that most probably the Duchess would come; she would be glad to talk it all over with her.

At the door she was met by Mr. Lawley's old servant. His grave face alarmed her.

“Yes, he is, my lady. He has not been able to see anybody for the last two days.”

“Oh, will he see me? Surely he will. I will not stay long to tire him.”

“Yes, I am sure he will see you, my lady.”

Fanny gave the reins to the groom, and went in.

In the hall she met Mrs. Snagg, the old housekeeper, who had been there ever so long. She had her handkerchief up to her eyes.

“Oh, my lady, this is a sad day for us. I am afraid the end has come.”

“May I go up?” asked Fanny, pressing the old woman’s hand kindly.

“Surely, surely, my lady. The sight of your bonny face will do him good.”

“ Is the doctor here ? ”

“ He has gone just now. The parson’s there.”

There, on his sofa, just as she had seen him about a fortnight ago, lay the old man. His face was as bright as ever, and his eyes smiled a warm grateful welcome to Fanny as she glided in. There was a flood of sunshine in the room, and some early spring flowers were by his side.

Mr. Camelford put down his book, and made way for her.

“ All things come to an end, Lady Fanny,” said Bob Lawley, “ and my long winter has finished at last.”

He smiled a reproof at her for letting a tear drop on the hand she fast held in hers.

“ You see the spring *is* here—a

“Thank God for that,” said she, half sobbing as she knelt beside him.

For half a moment his hand rested on her head.

“If I may give you a dying man’s blessing,” said he ; “here it is. You have been sunshine to me many a day. Bless you for it, bless you all your days here ; and, after that, may we meet again !”

He seemed so happy, so peaceful—looking upon these two as from some superior height of knowledge and being, just as if he were only leaving them behind, and that because they had not come so far they did not know so much.

One could not wish him to stay, his days had been so lonely, so painful, of late.

"I never thought I should linger so long," said he.

And still he looked as though only he had climbed to the top of some deep road, and they were still striving on. When they were nearer the goal, as he was, they would see the cost was nothing, the end beyond all they could dream.

"Life would not be difficult if we saw clearer."

"It is not difficult, Lady Fanny."

"No," said she, "it is not difficult."

But she did not know what she said. She wished for half a moment that she stood with him on the hill-top, to share his joy and peace.

"But only some, like you, deserve happiness," said she presently.

"There seems a flood of it now," said he, "and yet I never tried for it—never

They have all been so kind to me all the winter, sending me presents and making the hours fly . . . your brother Dick—and your wife, and Bates and Samson, and . . . all . . . ”

There was a sound of wheels.

“Did you send for any one?” asked Fanny.

“No, I have so few relations, and I don’t know them well. It would have troubled them.”

It was the Duchess.

She sent up a scrap of paper to Fanny : “May I come up ? ”

“ May she come up ? ” asked Fanny of Mr. Lawley.

“ Yes ; she is so good, I like her near me.”

So Mr. Camelford went down to her.

"My last Wednesday visit," said Bob Lawley to her as she came in.

"Oh no," said she, "I hope not. You are tired, that is all."

"Oh yes; I hope so, dear friend, I am so tired. Let me go."

. Was there ever such peace as seemed to float through that room? If ever angelic presences were felt, they seemed there then. The only discord was the longing ardent wish of the three watchers to keep their old friend with them. But human love, in all its selfishness, is powerless against the majesty and grandeur of Divine love.

"One cannot wish it, one must not wish it," said the Duchess.

Then his mind seemed to wander a little. He talked of Kirkcudbright, his

man's thoughts.

"I am coming—coming—we'll go together, shall we? Won't you wait for me? Won't you? Oh, the hounds, yes, they're all right. Look at them running, and you know he keeps them now, and I left the money all right."

Then he turned to them again and knew them both.

"Call Snagg and his wife."

"Lady Fanny, Julius will keep the hounds? He is a good fellow; it is my wish."

"Yes, yes, of course, whatever you wish."

"I have left you the old grey mare; she has been a good friend to me; be kind to her—but I know you will. And

the chestnut horse ; he always looked a gentleman ; I want Julius to have him."

It was no use, he might try to talk, but life was ebbing—the candle was near its end.

He shook hands with them all, he thanked them again, and then the servants came in.

He signed to them to come near, close to him.

" My old friends, my true friends," said he, and he shook hands with both.

" Open the window," said he.

The fresh spring-tide flowed in; a breath of gladness was shed through the room. It seemed like the voice of Nature singing a note of blessing.

And when they looked again the eyes

* * * *

• It was late when Fanny started to go back to the Priory ; and half way there she saw Julius walking towards her, who, alarmed lest any accident had happened, had set off to meet her.

“ It is all over,” said she.

He was dreadfully shocked.

Mr. Lawley had been ill so long, they had given up expecting the worst. One does forget one’s fears if one is reassured very often.

Then she told him all about it, and, subdued by a sense of it all, they let the ponies have their own way, and talked idly of that and other things.

“ A happy death,” said he, when she

had repeated over and over again Mr. Lawley's last words.

"Such deaths do one good," answered she. "They sicken one with all the falsehoods and shams of life, and give one a reality to hope for."

Presently Julius told her that Lady Kirkcudbright and Katie, with Lord Swansea, had been over to the Priory in Fanny's absence.

"When is the wedding to be?" asked she.

"Not yet. He wants it very grand, else it could have been sooner."

"It strikes me there are snobs of 'good connection,'" said Fanny, maliciously, remembering her mother's words, "as well as 'snobs of no connection' in the world."

"Oh, well, the display won't hurt us,

“ Why shouldn’t it ? ”

“ I don’t know. Only people say—well, nothing, except that everybody seems to do as they like nowadays, and one hears of nothing else but runnings away.”

“ I want to find a good husband for Moll now more than anything else ; Katie I give up—she bores me with her seasons and nonsense.”

“ I don’t much think Moll will ever marry.”

“ I don’t much think she will. She will be a sort of second Lady Burdett-Coutts.”

What was that thick volume of smoke coming up from the valley, and spreading all through the trees and all over the country ? They saw it as they reached

the brow of the hill whence you look down upon Fairdown and its old grey church. And still the smoke increased and rolled on and on.

“A fire!—it must be,” said Fanny, and whipped the ponies on with sudden alarm,

“Yes, it is a fire,” said Julius. “But stay, Fanny, you must not come.”

“Those old cottages will burn like tinder.”

“And my new ones won’t be improved.”

A sharp tongue of flame leapt up among the smoke.

Fanny lashed on the ponies; there was no time to speak or think.

“Won’t you go home, Fan?”

“Let me drive you there. They will want some one with a clear head.”

And so they did.

presented itself to their eyes:—women running along the road wildly, carrying all sorts of things; children crying, holding up hands that had been burnt and were driving them mad with pain; men swearing; and an idle crowd looking on, adding to the confusion and noise, and doing nothing.

Julius made Fanny stop some two hundred yards from this crowd, and made her promise, too, to go home soon.

“I will take care of myself, dear; I will come home soon,” he said as he left her, smiling to reassure her.

It was a magnificent sight.

The far end of the burning village was enveloped in smoke, which rolled in ever-increasing volumes overhead, increasing

in fierceness and rapidity every moment. Here and there the flames leapt up, and seemed to encircle, with fiery embrace, house or tree or homestead—all that came in their way. Every now and then some terrible crash, which seemed to fill the air for miles round, told of some roof falling in and some home doomed.

“Come with me,” shouted Julius, as he forced his way among the crowd, “any man among you who is good for anything.”

The men looked at each other.

“They be’s a-working, sir, over there. There bean’t no place for us.”

“Come along, I say. Don’t tell me men are not wanted in a case like that.”

About a dozen, with their hands in their pockets, detached themselves from the throng, and slouched along after him,

“How did it begin?” asked Fanny of a group near her.

“Some shavings, my lady, caught fire in one of the old houses, and it spread before they knew what they were about.”

The ponies grew restive; alarmed at the fire and the noise, they began to plunge and kick.

“I think you’d better go home, my lady,” said the groom.

“I wish I could be of some use. Steady, Punch—steady.”

“I won’t answer for these cobs, my lady, another minute.”

“Oh, very well.”

The man turned them, and Fanny went home to pass a miserable hour on the terrace at the Priory, looking at the distant fire, and waiting for Julius.

The landscape was quite lurid now with the ugly red light; the clouds were tinted with it, and long shadows on the hillsides made the whole scene weird and unearthly.

Julius was everywhere, calm and collected ; and, directing the crowd that hitherto had been useless and frightened, it now suddenly, under his influence, regained its presence of mind and its power. Julius established a chain of men from the stream, sent others for his own engines used on his farm, sent off another to Sloborough, and himself was foremost in carrying aid and saving life and property.

Here was an old woman, bedridden and helpless, whom they had left to die ; the flames had possession of one side of her house, and came nearer every instant ;

tenderly as if she had been a personal friend, and laid her on a mattress in the street. A minute after the house fell in.

"Your arm, sir," said a man standing by. "Look, you're burnt."

"Oh, it's nothing!"

He was excited. There was so much to do. His arm was nothing.

A child saved for its mother here, a poor crippled boy looked after there; he seemed to think of every one, to do everything at once. And not he alone; for his example had fired the others, and the young men, spurred on by his strength and efforts, lost their lethargic stupor, and became heroic, self-forgetful, too.

Cottage after cottage was down ; Julius's too, for which he had been so praised, on which he had spent so much money and pains ; and then, all at once, there was a shout. The engines had come. The Sloborough men had arrived, and here were the Priory engines, and here, too, was a detachment from Kirkcudbright. The weary chain of men might rest now a moment ; the fierce fire now surely has had its day.

Just then a cry rent the air—

“ The church—the church ! ” said a hundred voices at once.

The old grey Fairdown church of which they were all so proud ! The flames had stolen there too, and now the windows were venting smoke and fire, and out of the roof near the belfry-tower the flame peeped out maliciously now and again.

It had made an opening there for itself, and peered out in triumph, to disappear as suddenly.

More effort, more work, a few more struggles—one can but do one's best. If the fire was like a lion in its fury, the men were like tigers in their fierce eagerness to subdue it; but always, above their shouts, rose Julius's clear voice—exhorting steadiness here, perseverance there.

The cottages were but a game of play to the church. Some of them were laughing already at their hair-breadth escapes, and the dangers they ran. To disappoint the fire was their triumph.

Julius, on the roof of the church, called for the engines. They hurried off for them. Alas! before they could begin to play, the wood-work gave way, and he

disappeared. A groan of angry fury went up from the crowd, and they tore into the church to his aid. Not such a very bad fall after all, for fate had broken it, and there, in the organ loft, on the cushions and hassocks, he lay.

"Hurt, sir?" asked they gently.

But he did not answer—he was stunned, insensible. His clothes smelt of fire, and his neck was scathed and scarred. Well, there was nothing to be done. They must get him out and take him home. There was no place for him there.

All the way home as they carried him, they thought of the things he had done that day, and when at the Priory gate they met Lady Fanny, they reassured her as to his state: He had opened his eyes once or twice . . . he would be well . . . and then the countrymen told

she ever had in her life was when the rough fellows stood there and told her, with tears in their honest eyes, how her husband had worked for them, and how he had saved Jim's little child.

It seemed an age to Fanny before Julius came to, but at last he spoke—

“ The fire ! Is it saved—the church ? —tell them to come. Oh, Fanny, is that you ? ”

A week's nursing set him all right again, save his poor burnt arm which gave him pain for many a day ; but, after all, he said, if praise would make him well, or if praise made a man happy, then he should be the happiest man in Featherbedfordshire, for his praises were in every

one's mouth, till the Fairdown fire became quite a wearisome subject to him, and he began to get sulky and silent whenever it was mentioned.

Quiet days of recovery followed, when Dalton and Kate, and the Duke and Duchess, with, every now and then, the Kirkcudbrights, who were now busy about the Swansea wedding, were often at the Priory.

Plans for the rebuilding of Fairdown were the principal objects of interest to Julius. But there was one more subject which was of vital interest to the county, and that was the hounds.

Julius was now a hero ; they would be proud to have such a man for their Master. The question was, Would he take them ? A man with such courage, with such

country side, a man so liberal with purse and personal care and thoughtfulness as he had shown himself, might perhaps look down upon fox-hunting as mere sport !

Mr. Lawley's will had been read. There were legacies to the old servants, the grey mare and one thousand pounds to Fanny, the chestnut horse to Julius, five hundred pounds to Dick, some quaint old jewels to the Duchess, a present to this neighbour, a picture to that, then one thousand pounds a year to the hounds as he had promised, as long as they should be kept up, and after that to the next pack that hunted the adjoining county ; "The Brushes" to be sold, and the proceeds, with the residue of his property, to be given to

his cousin Tom Lawley, now living at Brackenbury, and to be spent on the estate there.

So a deputation came from the Featherbedfordshire Hunt to Julius, who told them their coming was the proudest compliment they could have paid him, and that he was too happy to be their humble servant. Was not hunting “the sport of kings? and was it not also the image of war, with only five-and-twenty per cent. of its danger?”

There was a dinner of inauguration at the Priory, at which Fanny and Julius won all hearts, and Dalton made a speech, in which he said he was proud to have Julius as his brother-in-law, as his next neighbour, as his comrade and friend; but if there were one position in which he

have all their interests at heart, as they would see next season, it was in the undeniably proud position of an M.F.H.

THE END.

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